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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Eleventh session

New York, 12–14 June 2018

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 June 2018, at 9 a.m.

President: Mr. Panayotov ..... (Bulgaria)
later: Mr. Khiari (Vice-President) ..... (Tunisia)

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(a) General debate

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The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties

1. **The President** declared open the Conference of States Parties and welcomed all participants.

2. *A video to mark the tenth anniversary since the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was shown in which a young woman with disabilities, Ms. Jillian Mercado, interviewed the Secretary-General and the President of the Conference.*

3. **The Secretary-General** said that he was pleased to join the participants at the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protected the rights of some 1.5 billion people around the world and was one of the most widely ratified international human rights treaties, with 177 ratifications since its adoption in 2006. The Convention represented a historic commitment which reaffirmed that persons with disabilities were entitled to exactly the same rights as everyone else, and that societies must be organized so that all people, including those with disabilities, could exercise their rights freely.

4. However, signing and ratifying the Convention was not enough. Implementation was essential. Countries must apply the Convention to their development policies, investments and legal systems to ensure that the central pledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — to leave no one behind — would be fulfilled. Societies would never achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without the full participation of everyone, including persons with disabilities. The international community could not afford to ignore or marginalize the contributions of 1.5 billion people.

5. Upholding the rights of persons with disabilities was a moral imperative, but not an act of charity. It was a recognition of rights and a practical necessity for building healthy, sustainable societies to the benefit of everyone — those with disabilities and those without. He strongly believed that despite many international agreements and initiatives, Member States, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and all stakeholders must do much more to ensure that persons with disabilities had full access to opportunities and could participate fully in society. That was why advancing the rights of persons with disabilities was firmly situated at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, the global blueprint for peaceful, prosperous societies on a healthy planet.

6. From the workplace to public transport systems, from concert halls to cyberspace and daily social interactions, persons with disabilities faced overt discrimination, stereotyping and lack of respect for their basic human rights. There was also a strong gender dimension to disability. Women and girls were disproportionately affected, particularly in the poorest countries in the world. Every minute, more than 30 women were seriously injured or disabled during childbirth. Women and girls with disabilities faced multiple barriers to accessing education, health services and jobs. Without women's empowerment and gender equality, millions of women would continue to suffer from double discrimination based on gender and disability.

7. Everyone must find new approaches and tools for working for, and with, persons with disabilities. Such approaches should include mainstreaming disability in national legislation and development strategies, and engaging and empowering persons with disabilities and the organizations that represented them. Discrimination against persons with disabilities had been going on for centuries, and it would take major efforts to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes and change mindsets. The powerful advocacy of the disability rights movement and the inspiring achievements of women and men with disabilities in all walks of life, from the science laboratory to the sports field, were bringing about lasting change in that regard.

8. It would also be crucial to continue and expand the work that United Nations agencies were doing to support Governments and develop their capacities on issues relating to disability. It was necessary to strengthen policy frameworks and laws on disability at the multilateral and global levels, in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. If persons with disabilities were to be part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, then institutions, mechanisms and processes must be coherent and coordinated.

9. That was the backdrop of the first flagship report on disability and development, which he would release later in 2018. He was grateful for the contributions towards that report that were being made by many experts from Member States, United Nations agencies, organizations representing persons with disabilities and other stakeholders.

10. At the same time, in order to ensure that the United Nations was leading by example, he had also initiated a comprehensive review of its work in the area of disability. The review would look at all aspects of how the United Nations addressed disability, from

accessibility and employment to mainstreaming disability across all work, particularly development and humanitarian aid. The review would inform a new United Nations action plan and an accountability framework to help the United Nations aim higher and fulfil its promises. He counted on the strong support of Member States and other stakeholders in the efforts to achieve those objectives.

11. The eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties was an opportunity to reflect on gaps and identify concrete steps to implement the Convention in full and in a timely manner. He looked forward to the outcomes of the Conference and counted on continued efforts by, for and with persons with disabilities. By working together, it was possible to remove barriers and raise awareness so that persons with disabilities could play a full part in every sphere of society around the world.

12. **The President** said that the protection and promotion of human rights was one of the three main pillars of the United Nations, a core value enshrined in its Charter and an underlying principle of its work in different areas. The current year marked the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a historic document which had laid the foundations for all international human rights treaties that upheld the rights and dignity of all, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society. The current session also marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention. Its adoption had demonstrated a major shift towards a human rights model of disability which codified the important principles of equality, non-discrimination and respect for human dignity and diversity as they related to persons with disabilities.

13. It was encouraging to see the stable trend towards universal ratification; since the previous session, Ireland, Libya and Monaco had ratified the Convention. The international community had taken significant steps to advance the implementation of the Convention in the years since its adoption. In that regard, he wished to highlight the work towards a United Nations system-wide action plan on disability, initiated by the Secretary-General. It was also encouraging to hear about the efforts undertaken by the President of the General Assembly to improve the accessibility of the General Assembly Hall, a key priority for Bulgaria as the President of the Conference. While such actions were important for mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities throughout the United Nations system, more needed to be done to ensure that persons with disabilities worldwide enjoyed all human rights and were included in society on an equal basis with others.

14. The Conference had grown over the years to become the largest and most important global forum on the rights of persons with disabilities. In close consultation with all stakeholders, the Bureau had decided that the overarching theme of the current session would be "Leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". Under that theme, the Conference would focus on three specific sub-themes: national fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation for strengthening the implementation of the Convention; women and girls with disabilities; and political participation and equal recognition before the law. The overarching theme and sub-themes reflected some of the most pressing issues for persons with disabilities and addressing them was crucial for delivering on other major global commitments of recent years.

15. The voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized needed to be heard and considered in all decision-making. The 2030 Agenda had recognized persons with disabilities as agents of change in sustainable development, and they should be actively involved in the implementation of the Agenda to ensure that no one was left behind. He looked forward to exploring ways to further strengthen cooperation and partnership among States parties, United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders in order to advance the shared mission of implementing the Convention in full, protecting the human rights of persons with disabilities and achieving inclusive development.

16. **Ms. Degener** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) said that, as the only female member of the Committee, she sincerely hoped that the current election of Committee members would bring greater gender balance. The voices of women with disabilities were often ignored or silenced, and political participation continued to be dominated by male representatives. Anti-discrimination laws often did not take intersectional discrimination into account. Leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Convention meant, first and foremost, that multiple discrimination against women and girls with disabilities needed to be tackled. Gender mainstreaming and affirmative action measures could be employed to ensure that those women and girls fully enjoyed all their human rights. Furthermore, in order to leave no one behind, the full diversity of persons with disabilities must be taken into account, including indigenous peoples, poor or rural-based persons, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and others.

17. The Committee had held more than 70 dialogues with States parties as it addressed the situation of people being left behind, and had observed that they often were not part of equality measures agreed by States parties, nor were such persons sufficiently recognized in national action plans for the implementation of the Convention. It was therefore necessary to adopt an equality policy based on an inclusive model. Inclusive equality went beyond formal and substantive equality, which had served as the basis of anti-discrimination policy over the last few decades. Accordingly, at its nineteenth session earlier in 2018, the Committee had adopted general comment No. 6 on equality and non-discrimination, which introduced an inclusive equality model based on four dimensions: a fair redistributive dimension to address socioeconomic disadvantages; a recognition dimension to combat stigma, stereotyping, prejudice and violence and to recognize the dignity of human beings and their intersectionality; a participative dimension to reaffirm the social nature of people as members of social groups, and the full recognition of humanity through inclusion in society; and an accommodating dimension to make space for difference as a matter of human dignity. The inclusive equality model would also serve as the basis for the drafting of general comment No. 7 on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention.

18. She was pleased to note the positive relationship between the Committee and the Bureau of the Conference, which set a good example for other treaty bodies and Conferences of States parties in the light of General Assembly resolution 68/268. However, serious cutbacks faced by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights meant that participation by the Chairperson of the Committee and one other Committee expert in future Conferences in New York would be jeopardized. She therefore recommended that the necessary support for their travel should be included in the budget for the twelfth and subsequent sessions of the Conference.

19. **Ms. Devandas Aguilar** (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) said that leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Convention required ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all persons with disabilities. The international community had made progress, but the promise of change brought about by the Convention was not reaching everyone in the same way. The Convention had enabled the rights of persons with disabilities to be incorporated in national and international agendas, but there were still significant challenges in the formulation and implementation of public policies that responded to the demands and needs of those persons. The diverse and complex challenges included: difficulties in the diagnosis and delimitation of problems; several intervention models that needed to be reconsidered; insufficient technical capacity of the operators; a lack of coherence and coordination among sectors and stakeholders; insufficient statistical and administrative information; financing and sustainability challenges; insufficient mechanisms for measuring results; and a lack of mechanisms for ensuring participation and accountability.

20. The United Nations system needed to be strengthened to maximize its impact as a strategic partner of States in realizing the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring their inclusion in all development efforts. The decisions announced by the Secretary-General towards ensuring accessibility and mainstreaming the rights of persons with disability across all United Nations operations were encouraging and demonstrated his leadership and commitment to reforming the Organization to make its human rights and development work more effective and inclusive. She called on all States parties to support that reform process, which would undoubtedly be beneficial for all. The United Nations, States parties, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations had irreplaceable roles to play in making the rights of persons with disabilities a reality. It was important to work together to build inclusive societies that would afford everyone the opportunity to grow, develop and contribute to their communities with dignity, autonomy and independence.

21. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility) said that the Convention had revolutionized the field of human rights and had strongly influenced the 2030 Agenda. With the growing number of States parties to the Convention, the sessions of the Conference of States Parties had become increasingly important for fostering dialogue on key issues. One of the sub-themes of the present session was national fiscal space, including the allocation of public resources to disability issues and public-private partnerships. Indeed, the private sector had a key role to play in promoting sustainable development.

22. Another of the sub-themes was the political participation of persons with disabilities. Welcoming the contribution of civil society to the work of the United Nations, she said that over the past decade, organizations of persons with disabilities had become increasingly influential at the national, regional and

international levels. In addition, there were several persons with disabilities holding public office, including the President of Ecuador and the Vice-President of Argentina, which showed that merit did indeed overcome prejudice. She acknowledged the efforts of those who had fought to secure equal recognition before the law for persons with disabilities and called for all political, legal and social systems to comply with that fundamental principle. Pursuant to the *pro persona* principle, persons with disabilities should enjoy full autonomy, including the freedom to make their own choices.

23. She welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to mainstream the human rights of persons with disabilities, including the proposed system-wide policy, action plan, accountability framework, and guidelines on accessibility and the employment of persons with disabilities by the United Nations. The success of such initiatives depended on the involvement of all stakeholders. To ensure that no one was left behind, in line with the overarching theme of the session, education on sustainable development and sustainable living, based on human rights, respect for diversity and gender equality, was essential, as were high-quality data and statistics. She called on national statistical offices and census bureaux to provide relevant data to enable Governments to develop sound public policies.

24. While Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality did not include an explicit reference to persons with disabilities, it was clear that women and girls with disabilities must be empowered to participate in all spheres of life. All stakeholders had a responsibility to ensure the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities. The recent election of Ms. Ana Pelaez Narváez to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the awarding of the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, to Ms. Yetnebersh Nigussie were evidence of the growing leadership role being played by women with disabilities.

25. **Mr. Allen** (Chair of the International Disability Alliance) said that actions spoke louder than words, and that article 4.3 of the Convention had been transformed into action through the Conference of States Parties. The Conference was a process that directly affected the lives of persons with disabilities: not only those currently in the meeting room, but also the more than 1 billion people they represented. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, together with Governments, the United Nations system and civil society, were building a strong and robust platform for progress on the basis of the Convention, the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the forthcoming Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

26. Working together was already bearing fruit. All stakeholders must hold each other accountable and ensure that legally binding obligations were fulfilled and that the commitment to a society inclusive of all was realized. Furthermore, the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities must be achieved across the United Nations system, disability recognized as a cross-cutting issue, and action pursued until it could be stated with absolute certainty that all rights for all persons with disabilities had been realized.

27. The International Disability Alliance encouraged States to spell out their commitments towards the implementation of the Convention at the forthcoming Global Disability Summit, which represented a critical step towards tangible action for persons with disabilities worldwide. The Alliance welcomed United Nations efforts to establish a system-wide action plan and accountability framework, and was committed to supporting the Organization in consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. The Alliance also urged the United Nations system, and the humanitarian community in particular, to commit to a truly people-centred and inclusive rights-based approach to disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines would be an indispensable component of that work, but stronger commitments were needed from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Organization for Migration as well as humanitarian actors and Governments. Now was the time to move together from commitment to action.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the agenda
(CRPD/CSP/2018/1)

28. *The agenda was adopted.*

Agenda item 3: Organization of work

Accreditation and registration of non-governmental organizations

29. The President, drawing attention to the list of non-governmental organizations requesting accreditation to the Conference circulated to States parties by the Secretariat on 25 April 2018, said that he took it that the States parties wished to accede to the requests of 29 non-governmental organizations to participate as observers.

30. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 4: Election of members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1 and CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1/Add.1)

31. The President invited the Conference to elect by secret ballot nine members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to fill the vacancies that would occur on 31 December 2018. He drew attention to the election procedure and other relevant provisions set out in article 34 of the Convention. The curricula vitae of the candidates nominated by States parties whose nominations had been received before the deadline of 12 April 2018 set by the Secretariat had been circulated in document CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1. The curriculum vitae of one candidate whose nomination had been received after 12 April 2018 had been circulated in document CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1/Add.1. Since the deadline set by the Secretariat served purely administrative purposes and had no legal force, he took it that States parties agreed to accept the nomination received after 12 April 2018.

32. *It was so decided.*

33. *At the invitation of the President, Ms. Hillebrandt (Bahamas), Ms. Balogh (Hungary), Ms. Sola (Germany), Ms. Maitsi (Lesotho) and Ms. Deegan (Palau) acted as tellers.*

34. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	176
Number of valid ballots:	176
Number of representatives voting:	176
Required majority:	89
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Ruškus (Lithuania)	111
Mr. Umaru Basharu (Nigeria)	108
Ms. Kayess (Australia)	107
Mr. Schefer (Switzerland)	104
Ms. Kim (Republic of Korea)	99
Ms. Fefoame (Ghana)	92
Ms. Gabrilli (Brazil)	85
Ms. Utami (Indonesia)	85
Mr. You (China)	81
Ms. Gamio Ríos (Mexico)	79
Ms. Ifill (Barbados)	77
Mr. Parra Dussan (Colombia)	70
Ms. Boresly (Kuwait)	69
Ms. Aldana Salguero (Guatemala)	68
Mr. Pyaneandee (Mauritius)	63
Ms. Hagrass (Egypt)	62
Mr. Escalante (El Salvador)	55
Mr. Debattista (Malta)	36
Ms. Gorday de Villalobos (Panama)	23
Ms. Trawkowska (Poland)	23
Ms. Panasyuk (Ukraine)	11
Ms. Vujačić (Montenegro)	9

35. *Having obtained the required majority, Mr. Ruškus (Lithuania), Mr. Umaru Basharu (Nigeria), Ms. Kayess (Australia), Mr. Schefer (Switzerland), Ms. Kim (Republic of Korea) and Ms. Fefoame (Ghana) were elected as members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.*

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention

(a) General debate

36. **Mr. Nenem** (Kiribati) said that national legislation was being brought into line with the Convention, and further strengthened and implemented through a variety of inclusive policies. His Government expected to finalize its review of the national disability policy by the end of the month, and had also explored and subsequently approved a national financial support system, to begin in 2019, for persons whose impairments had permanently and severely hindered their abilities to engage in traditional economic activities for their livelihoods. The data collected in the 2015 national census, incorporating the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, had been immensely helpful in the development of the national financial support scheme. An employment quota for persons with disabilities would also be considered and finalized by 2019. Such progress was possible through continued cooperation between the Government and its bilateral and multilateral development partners, including the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, the World Health Organization and other international organizations. At the same time, he noted that his Government had limited resources to meet the needs of all Kiribatiens with disabilities as most services were provided for them only on the main island of South Tarawa. Partnerships to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities living on the outer islands would therefore be crucial.

37. **Ms. González de Moreno** (Ecuador) said that the President of Ecuador, Mr. Lenin Moreno Garcés, had established the "Toda una vida" plan, which comprised several subprogrammes aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the Convention. The comprehensive, cross-sectoral plan took a life cycle approach to the protection of the rights of priority groups. The aim was to create a robust social protection floor that would improve their quality of life through the coordinated provision of social services. The Government intended to carry out individual

follow-up to ensure that all those concerned received effective and joined-up social services and could lead a decent life. As with the 2030 Agenda, the plan sought to leave no one behind.

38. The issue of disability was one of the cross-cutting and priority themes of the Government's plan. As persons with disabilities living in poverty had limited access to social services, a follow-up and monitoring system was essential to meet their needs. The "Misión Las Manuelas", one of the subprogrammes of the "Toda una vida" plan, provided comprehensive support to persons with disabilities and their families throughout the country. In line with the principle of "nothing about us without us", the subprogramme took into account the needs and wishes of those concerned.

39. Another of the subprogrammes, "Casas para todos", was intended to provide decent housing for all, with priority for persons with disabilities. The housing estates included parks and community spaces, with a view to fostering entrepreneurship and creating secure, peaceful and inclusive communities. Yet another subprogramme, "Mis Mejores Años", focused on the needs of elderly persons and sought to ensure that those affected by age-related disabilities were not forgotten by the State. The Government was also examining the possibility of training individuals nearing retirement age to be volunteers.

40. All stakeholders had a responsibility to protect human rights. In his capacity as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, the President of Ecuador had promoted the universalization of policies in support of persons with disabilities. The Government was firmly committed to fostering inclusion, solidarity and equality, with a view to creating a culture of peace.

41. **Ms. Duncan** (Canada) said that her Government had engaged with the disability community in Canada to address some of its recommendations on issues related to risk and humanitarian emergencies, legal capacity, intersectionality and women and girls with disabilities. The Government had also had the Convention and its Optional Protocol published in American Sign Language and *Langue des signes Québecoise*, and was working with provincial and territorial partners towards accession to the Optional Protocol. It was committed to developing legislation that would ensure greater accessibility and opportunities for persons with disabilities and expected to announce a decision on the Optional Protocol and the introduction of relevant legislation in the near future.

42. Canada was committed to ensuring inclusive development, as an important part of its feminist international assistance policy, and to delivering humanitarian action that was inclusive of persons with disabilities. In that connection, she commended the Governments of the United Kingdom and Kenya as well as the International Disability Alliance for their leadership in hosting the forthcoming Global Disability Summit.

43. **Mr. Muhammad Bande** (Nigeria) said that his Government had reviewed its national policy on disability in line with current global best practices, and attention was now being focused on persons with disabilities in the context of social welfare incentives. Several Nigerians with disabilities had made great achievements in various areas, including sporting competitions. In terms of capacity-building, persons with disabilities had been further engaged through the provision of economic enhancement tools and materials, including various types of industrial machines and equipment, to increase their incomes.

44. On an annual basis, the Government was procuring and distributing assistive devices and tools such as wheelchairs, tricycles, Braille machines and guide canes to persons with disabilities. International partners such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency had made great contributions towards that effort. Over the last few years, the Government had been implementing a public employment policy guaranteeing 2 per cent of public employment for persons with disabilities. Similarly, corporate organizations in Nigeria had recently been requested to reserve at least 2 per cent of their labour force for persons with disabilities.

45. A national disability bill had been harmonized by the two chambers of the National Assembly and was currently awaiting presidential assent. The bill would improve the welfare of persons with disabilities by further guaranteeing their rights and privileges in public and private policies and programmes. Persons with disabilities would also be encouraged to participate in the forthcoming general elections by voting and running for elected office.

46. **Ms. Sepuloni** (New Zealand) said that persons with disabilities must not be invisible and that high-quality statistics and data disaggregated by disability status were essential for fully realizing their rights. To that end, her Government had included the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability in the 2018 national census.

47. The New Zealand Disability Strategy, along with its supporting plan and framework for measuring progress, envisaged the country as a non-disabling society where persons with disabilities had equal opportunities to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Those mechanisms functioned together to implement the Convention and were governed jointly by organizations of persons with disabilities and government agencies, in line with the Convention.

48. A co-design approach was being used to enable children, young people and adults with disabilities and their families to enjoy more choice and decision-making regarding the support they received. The Government was also pleased to have worked with Mexico and Sweden in introducing the first substantive resolution of the Third Committee concerning the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

49. Although progress had been made through partnerships and stakeholder engagement in the context of the United Nations, there was room for improvement. The Organization should be at the forefront of the implementation of disability-inclusive policies. In that regard, the obligations to provide reasonable accommodation, as set out in the Convention, should be met in order to ensure the full and effective participation of the people who worked for the United Nations.

50. New Zealand welcomed the announcement of the United Nations system-wide action plan, and looked forward to further progress so that no one would be left behind.

51. *Mr. Khiari (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

52. **Mr. Samaniego** (Paraguay) said that he welcomed the fact that several persons with disabilities were holding high political offices. He congratulated the President of Ecuador and the Vice-President of Argentina on their elections.

53. **Ms. Ferreira** (Paraguay) said that in the 10 years since Paraguay had ratified the Convention, through Act No. 3540/2008, a great deal of progress had been made and social attitudes to persons with disabilities were changing. The concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the initial report of Paraguay (CRPD/C/PRY/CO/1) had served as a guide for implementing the Convention. A study had also been carried out to examine what life was like for persons with disabilities in Paraguay. The findings of the study had fed into the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, developed by the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

54. Various laws had been enacted, including on accessibility and inclusive education. For example, a percentage of places on university, vocational and teacher training courses were reserved for persons with disabilities and efforts were being made to ensure that 5 per cent of public sector jobs were filled by persons with disabilities, in line with national legislation. To help persons with disabilities to secure employment, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security organized training courses and job fairs, and her Government had designated 20 May as the annual national day for labour market inclusion. To combat poverty, under the national cash transfer programme, families where one member had a disability received additional money.

55. In collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, her Government was conducting a campaign to raise awareness of disability issues. Some 20 trainers with various physical, visual, auditory and psychosocial disabilities held training workshops where various issues were discussed, including how to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

56. **Ms. Djaba** (Ghana) said that her Government worked hand in hand with persons with disabilities. For instance, it had made the head of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations the Chair of the National Council for Persons with Disability. In addition to reviewing the Persons with Disability Act of 2006, Ghana had domesticated the Convention and had established a technical committee to oversee its implementation. It was implementing the provisions of the Ghana Standard on Accessibility Designs and incorporating them into the building code and transport policy. The State broadcaster had begun airing television programmes in sign language. The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled would enter into force in Ghana in August 2018.

57. A registration exercise to obtain accurate disaggregated data was under way. According to the 2010 census, there were 737,000 persons with disabilities living in Ghana, of whom 40 per cent were visually impaired, 25 per cent had physical disabilities and 13 per cent had speech impairments. Her Government had established over 60 schools for children with special needs. Universities were striving to become more accessible by providing special assistance for persons with disabilities. Funds had been made available to cover the tuition fees of 50 persons with disabilities. Her Government also provided cash grants to over 156,000 persons with disabilities and had launched an operation to reduce the number of persons with disabilities living on the streets.

58. However, Ghana faced several challenges, including inadequate assistive devices, negative public perceptions of persons with disabilities and a lack of

disaggregated data. To ensure the full implementation of the Convention, her Government would continue to work with all members of society. Mainstreaming disability and ensuring that persons with disabilities were treated as equals was a collective responsibility.

59. **Mr. McGrath** (Ireland) said that in March 2018 Ireland had ratified the Convention, the last European Union member State to do so. The Convention's entry into force one month later had been a milestone for persons with disabilities and Irish society, signalling his Government's commitment to improve the provision of disability services. Furthermore, the National Disability Inclusion Strategy set out over 100 measurable and time-specific actions and took a whole-of-Government approach to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and enabling them to fulfil their potential. In line with the guiding principles of the Convention, in particular respect for the inherent dignity and individual autonomy of persons with disabilities, the Strategy contained a commitment to establish a personalized budgeting task force, with a view to introducing individualized budgets.

60. It was important to focus on a person's abilities, rather than on his or her disabilities, and to ensure that persons with disability had the right to makes decisions for themselves, rather than having decisions made for them. One relevant action was the implementation of a comprehensive employment strategy for persons with disabilities, including an increase of the public service employment target from 3 to 6 per cent, the holding of special public service competitions and the opening of alternative recruitment channels.

61. **Ms. Prentice** (Australia) said that disability issues were a priority for her Government in the context of its international engagement in issues related to development, humanitarian action and human rights. Australia was the Co-Chair of the Global Action on Disability Network, alongside the International Disability Alliance. That unique partnership enhanced international cooperation towards more disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action. Her Government was a leading global advocate for disability data. As accurate data enhanced the visibility of persons with disabilities, she welcomed the decision to make the promotion of high-quality disability statistics and disaggregated data the cross-cutting theme of the eleventh session.

62. The National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, which was the first time that all parts of Government had committed to a unified approach, was intended to bring about a shift in attitudes and promote a more inclusive approach to the design of policies, programmes and infrastructure, so that persons with disabilities could participate in all areas of life. Work had already begun on a national disability framework beyond 2020, including a national disability insurance scheme. Once implemented, the scheme would support over 160,000 Australians with disabilities. A programme established in 2010 to support job seekers with disabilities had helped over 400,000 people to secure jobs. Her Government would seek to further improve the programme, with a view to empowering persons with disabilities and helping them to secure long-term employment.

63. **Mr. Karabay** (Turkey) said that his Government had taken steps over the past decade to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate in society on an equal basis with others. Legal arrangements had been put into place to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market, enable them to continue their education, improve community-based care services, diversify social protection measures and improve accessibility. The country's eleventh development plan, covering the period 2019–2023, incorporated a disability-inclusive approach, in line with the 2030 Agenda. A national strategy paper and a plan of action on the rights of persons with disabilities were also being prepared.

64. Disaggregated data was used to monitor such initiatives. Between 2013 and 2016, Turkey, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, had carried out a project to improve the implementation and monitoring of the Convention. As part of the project, national indicators had been prepared to provide a basis for the data on rights-based monitoring.

65. His Government was committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities were involved in decision-making processes and worked closely with civil society organizations.

66. **Ms. Al-Rammah** (Saudi Arabia) said that article 27 of the Constitution of Saudi Arabia guaranteed the rights of individuals and their families in the event of illness, disability and old age. Having acceded to the Convention and its Optional Protocol, Saudi Arabia had enacted legislation that protected the rights of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, her Government was currently developing a national strategy, programme and register for persons with disabilities and harmonizing its statistics and data.

67. Persons with disabilities accounted for 7 per cent of the population of Saudi Arabia and 48 per cent of the labour force had accessibility problems. The Government's National Transformation Programme

2020 was intended to integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market and help them to secure employment. To ensure that such persons could be active members of society, early education and intervention programmes for children with disabilities had been established and students were given assistance so that they could complete their education. Numerous support centres for persons with disabilities had been established and the King Salman Award for Disability Research had been set up to promote research into disability issues. All such initiatives were overseen by a dedicated State body.

68. **Ms. Radišauskienė** (Lithuania) said that her country had ratified the Convention in 2010 and was making every effort to ensure its full implementation so that persons with disabilities could fully participate in public life and be self-sufficient. All individuals should be able to lead independent lives within close-knit communities. One of her Government's top priorities was to identify and help those who were excluded from society.

69. Her Government had introduced several policies to provide effective support to persons with disabilities and their families. For instance, immediately after the birth of a child with disabilities, the parents were offered comprehensive support; additional health care and social services were available for persons with disabilities; and her Government was working to improve access to education and adapted housing, and to increase the number of jobs open to persons with disabilities.

70. **Ms. Dimitrova** (Bulgaria) said that Bulgarian legislation provided legal guarantees of non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2016–2020 took into account the principles of the Convention, the recommendations of the Council of Europe and European Union legislation. Aligning national legislation with the provisions of the Convention was a continuous process. Persons with disabilities participated in every stage of the legislative process. Indeed, representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and representatives of civil society sat on the National Council for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.

71. Her Government was constantly upgrading relevant laws to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. For example, it intended to enact a law on the integration of persons with disabilities; it was drafting a law on social services that would establish an innovative model of financing and enhance the quality, effectiveness, management and monitoring of social services; and it was preparing new legislation pursuant to article 21 of the Convention on freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information, including a provision for the introduction of Bulgarian sign language.

72. As President of the current session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention, Bulgaria had actively involved persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all aspects of the preparations. Governments must work with and learn from organizations of persons with disabilities in order to fully implement the Convention. It was also important to ensure the effective participation of persons with disabilities in all development efforts. Strengthening the implementation of the Convention and creating the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities were crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.

73. **Mr. Bandpey** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his Government had long been committed to supporting persons with disabilities. In 1980, 16 different agencies had been merged to form the State Welfare Organization, which provided rehabilitation, prevention and protection services to over 1.4 million people and ensured that the essential needs of persons with disabilities were met. Its work was supported by over 7,000 non-governmental organizations.

74. The State Welfare Organization sought to prevent disability through screening, timely intervention and early diagnosis. In addition, the Organization had set up an emergency telephone line to allow people to report violence against persons with disabilities; it worked to boost employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by providing occupational support and vocational training, contributing to their monthly salaries and reserving 3 per cent of public sector jobs for persons with disabilities; it aimed to improve social participation and strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations; it had established a dedicated secretariat to promote the implementation of accessibility measures; and it was working with counterparts in other Member States to improve service delivery and share educational and operational experiences.

75. A mechanism had been created to follow-up the implementation of the Convention. In March 2018, the law on the rights of persons with disabilities had been amended to remove operational barriers and bring it closer to the provisions of the Convention, with a human rights-based approach. A committee composed of organizations of persons with disabilities and other

relevant stakeholders would monitor the implementation of the amended legislation.

76. **Mr. Muniz** (Brazil) said that his country had made significant efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and incorporate into domestic law the obligations set forth in the Convention. It was cognizant of the remaining challenges and determined to overcome them. The candidacy of Ms. Mara Gabrilli for membership of the Committee reflected the progress made in that regard. The Convention was now deemed to be an integral part of the Constitution and had the force of a constitutional text. Brazil had made particular progress in implementing public policies and adopting laws and regulations consistent with the Convention. The Brazilian Inclusivity Act had been amended in 2015 to include practical actions to implement the Convention, particularly with regard to accessibility. Guidelines on accessibility for engineering works and services had also been formulated. A regulation on telecommunications accessibility had been published, and two presidential decrees had very recently been adopted to provide for accessibility in small enterprises and entertainment venues respectively. Some 2,000 professionals had been trained in Brazilian Sign Language, and quotas were in place for persons with disabilities at public federal universities. The Government was working with civil society organizations to foster inclusivity in the job market, provide professional training and rehabilitation, and ensure access to braces, prostheses and other health care. The National Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a broad-based organization that brought together public and civil society entities, had played a prominent role in those areas.

77. **Ms. Kospiri** (Albania) said that, since its ratification of the Convention, Albania had made good progress in terms of strengthening respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2016, a national action plan for persons with disabilities had been approved. The plan, which had been prepared in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, was intended to promote inclusion, prevent discrimination and eliminate barriers to accessing public services. The implementation of the plan would be monitored by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

78. The Convention had been domesticated through a framework law on inclusion and accessibility. A law on social housing for persons with disabilities had also been enacted. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection was reforming the disability assessment system, in line with World Health Organization guidelines and standards. A multidisciplinary disability assessment commission was being established; its work would be based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health.

79. In addition, efforts were being made to strengthen cooperation with civil society organizations and improve the collection of statistical data at the local level. The number of teaching assistants in schools for children with disabilities had doubled, and more persons with disabilities were in employment. Lastly, her Government had simplified the procedures and documents required to access public services.

80. **Ms. Manombe-Ncube** (Namibia) said that her country's fifth national development plan, which was aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, comprised four strategic pillars: economic progression; social transformation; environmental sustainability; and good governance. The plan was intended to ensure that, by 2023, persons with disabilities had access to high-quality, integrated social protection. Legislation, policies and programmes to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities were in the pipeline. The University of Namibia had recently established a dedicated office to address the needs of students with disabilities. The Government had also introduced a bursary for students with disabilities.

81. National stakeholder workshops on disability issues had revealed that many government entities experienced severe bottlenecks in implementing legislation in sectors such as health, education and development. Disability-inclusive development strategies required a multisectoral approach, in which the role of every stakeholder was explained, appreciated and acknowledged. Other findings were that parents of children with disabilities often believed that there was no point in sending them to school and that many persons with disabilities had limited access to justice owing to communication barriers, a situation little was being done to address. The workshops had opened the Government's eyes to the fact that awareness-raising and advocacy work was a continuous and lifelong process, and had improved its engagement with the legal profession, local and regional governments, traditional authorities and grass-roots communities.

82. Namibia continued to strive for the inclusion of all and was increasingly being recognized regionally and internationally for its efforts. For instance, a Namibian non-governmental organization had recently been awarded the Bari-Bari prize for outstanding albinism advocacy. In addition, Namibia had received recognition from the Africa Disability Alliance and been nominated to act as a mentor to other African countries and champion the development of policy and legal

frameworks under the African Union Disability Architecture.

84. **Ms. Arellano** (Observer for the International Disability Alliance) said that the International Disability Alliance was a network of eight global and six regional organizations of persons with disabilities and their families, representing over 1,100 national organizations in more than 180 countries.

85. The International Disability Alliance had been instrumental in the drafting and negotiation process of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had advocated for the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities across the United Nations system. The Alliance had been instrumental in the establishment of the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in the creation of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up mechanism; and in the establishment and co-chairing role of the Global Action on Disability Network. It would co-host the first ever Global Disability Summit in July 2018, together with the Governments of the United Kingdom and Kenya.

83. The Alliance wished to recognize the current Bureau of the Conference of States Parties for its leadership in the planning and development of the sessions in 2017 and 2018. It welcomed the fact that the priorities of organizations of persons with disabilities had been embedded into the fabric of the Conference. However, the Alliance was gravely concerned that meaningful consultations with the organizations under its umbrella at the country and community levels were becoming less frequent, and that fewer fiscal resources were being allocated for the implementation of the Convention. For all groups of persons with disabilities to be effectively included in all areas of development and humanitarian action, a greater financial commitment would be required at all levels.

86. The Alliance was also concerned that the United Nations system continued to be reluctant to produce concrete recommendations on the disaggregation of data by disability in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The lack of such disaggregated data would increase the risk that persons with disabilities would not be counted and therefore systematically excluded from policies and programming.

87. The Alliance therefore called on the United Nations system and Member States to establish a system-wide strategic policy, action plan and accountability framework and to create a unit dedicated to the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system; to include persons with disabilities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly women and children, through active consultation and engagement with their representative organizations at the national and subnational levels; to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all humanitarian and security policy frameworks, strategic plans and programmes; to collect and disaggregate data through the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability; and to increase investment in disability-inclusive development, ensuring adequate support to persons with disabilities, particularly underrepresented groups, and their representative organizations, so that those persons could develop the skills and capacities that would enable them to engage in and contribute to society in a meaningful way.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

United Nations CRPD/CSP/2018/SR.2

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Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Eleventh session

New York, 12–14 June 2018

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 12 June 2018 at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Panayotov ..... (Bulgaria)

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(a) General debate (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 4: Election of the members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (*continued*) (CRPD/CSP/2018/CRP.1/Rev.1 and CRPD/CSP/2018/Rev.1/Add.1)

1. **The President** said that, as three vacancies remained to be filled, a second round of voting would be held, restricted to the six candidates who had received the largest number of votes while not obtaining the required majority.

2. *At the invitation of the President, Ms. Hillebrandt (Bahamas), Ms. Balogh (Hungary), Ms. Sola (Germany), Ms. Maitsi (Lesotho) and Ms. Deegan (Palau) acted as tellers.*

3. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	175
Number of valid ballots:	175
Number of representatives voting:	175
Required majority:	88
Number of votes obtained:	
Ms. Gabrilli (Brazil)	103
Ms. Utami (Indonesia)	92
Ms. Gamio Ríos (Mexico)	90
Mr. You (China)	77
Ms. Ifill (Barbados)	77
Mr. Parra Dussan (Colombia)	63

4. *Having obtained the required majority, Ms. Gabrilli (Brazil), Ms. Utami (Indonesia) and Ms. Gamio Ríos (Mexico) were elected as members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for the period from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021.*

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

5. **Ms. Krentovska** (Ukraine) said that the President, Government and parliament of Ukraine were committed to the ensuring that civil society initiatives related to human rights and disability reflected the principle of "nothing about us without us". She expressed gratitude to the United Nations for its fruitful cooperation on disability issues, in particular during her Government's presentation of its initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/UKR/1). Ukraine had adopted an action plan to implement the recommendations contained in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/UKR/CO/1).

6. The aggression in Donbass and the temporary occupation of the Ukrainian Crimea had challenged the Ukrainian Government, civil society and Ukrainian citizens, and the war had affected persons with disabilities most of all. There were 60,000 internally displaced persons with disabilities, including wounded servicemen. Military actions had had a negative impact on the social and economic situation in the country, with repercussions for social budgetary provisions.

7. In September 2017, the parliament of Ukraine had adopted a law establishing the right to inclusive education for people with special education needs. As part of the ongoing deinstitutionalization reform in Ukraine, the Government had allocated funds for the establishment of methodological centres to promote inclusion in schools and had introduced a system of early intervention services for children with disabilities up to 4 years of age, in order to avoid placing them in specialized residential institutions. Comprehensive piloting of those initiatives had begun in 2017 and 13 methodological centres were expected to be established by the end of 2018.

8. Using an integrated approach, the Government was developing social and rehabilitation services in the territorial communities established as part of the decentralization reform that had been taking place in Ukraine since 2015. That reform had provided the territorial communities with greater financial resources and had enabled the development of community-based social services and the adaptation of infrastructure and transport to the needs of persons with disabilities, areas in which municipalities were encouraged to step up their efforts. In addition, in 2018, the Government had introduced new budget programmes providing transport services for persons with disabilities and small group homes for children with disabilities.

9. **Ms. Mercado** (Denmark) said that, in 2009, Denmark had ratified the Convention, which provided a powerful framework for developing policy on disability issues. The participation of all people, regardless of their age, gender, origin, sexuality or disability status, was required in order to achieve diverse and inclusive societies. In that connection, her Government had recently adopted a law prohibiting — both within and outside the labour market — direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and reprisals on the basis of disability.

10. The Government of Denmark was committed to expanding access to the labour market for persons with disabilities. As a supplement to the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations high-level political forum on sustainable

development, in 2017 the Government had launched a national action plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The action plan included the goal of increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, which contributed towards ensuring quality education, promoting decent work and economic growth, and reducing inequalities. A small increase in the employment rate for persons with disabilities had already been registered in Denmark.

11. A broad range of measures was being developed to monitor progress made by Denmark in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its national development goals. For example, the national statistical agency Statistics Denmark would soon launch a platform reflecting the progress achieved towards 100 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators, with data on the remaining indicators to be compiled in due course. New data and results related to the implementation of the Goals would be published in August 2018.

12. The Ministry for Children and Social Affairs of Denmark was working to improve annual indicators on persons receiving social assistance, including persons with disabilities. Such indicators, together with the adaptation of national and international development goals to needs at the local level, would enable municipal councils to effect direct change.

13. **Ms. Villalobos** (El Salvador) said that the National Council for Comprehensive Support for Persons with Disabilities of El Salvador, the primary body responsible for monitoring and evaluating implementation both of the Convention and of national policy on persons with disabilities, had agreed with the Ministry of Finance to include a provision in the general regulations on budgetary formulation requiring public institutions to allocate budgetary resources for programmes that protected the rights of persons with disabilities in the areas of health, education, employment and social protection. In addition, the FOMILENIO II project provided for the establishment of educational centres with accessibility features and the construction of accessible walkways as part of the coastal highway expansion initiative.

14. Since 2009, El Salvador had been promoting reforms and regulations designed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and eradicate discrimination on the basis of disability status, with a focus on education, health, employment, accessibility and participation. The development of women and children with disabilities was a particular challenge. To that end, teacher training and initiatives to improve the capacity of schools to support the sustained enrolment of children with disabilities were being conducted. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, together with representatives of various productive sectors in El Salvador, had recently signed a national employment pact with the goal of increasing the employability of persons with disabilities and promoting decent work opportunities.

15. With the participation of the Executive Technical Unit of the justice sector of El Salvador, and with technical and financial support from the Regional Project on Human Rights and Democracy, led by the Pan American Development Foundation, and from a disability-related organization in Guatemala, an assessment had been carried out to assist the criminal justice administration systems of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in improving access to justice for persons with disabilities. El Salvador also had a body responsible for monitoring implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals relating to education, decent work, health, poverty reduction, gender equality and access to basic services.

16. **Ms. Bogopane-Zulu** (South Africa) said that the Conference of States Parties had inspired her delegation to find innovative ways to accelerate implementation of the Convention and the upcoming centenary of the births of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu would provide an opportunity for South Africa to renew its commitment to the values embodied by the two leaders of the country's liberation struggle. Her Government appreciated the support demonstrated for the candidacy of South Africa for non-permanent membership of the Security Council beginning in 2019. During its term on the Council, South Africa would work to advance African interests, in particular the goal of silencing guns — a leading cause of disabilities in Africa — by 2020, in line with the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

17. The adoption at the thirtieth African Union summit of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa had heralded a new era for persons with disabilities on the continent. The Protocol, which included measures to ensure the protection and safety of such persons in situations of risk and to reduce the impact of economic vulnerability on their quality of life, would be a priority for her country during its term on the Security Council. South Africa had taken initial steps to ratify the Protocol and would incorporate it, together with the Convention, into its domestic legislation in the coming years.

18. South Africa had recently finalized national frameworks on reasonable accommodation and on

universal access and design for persons with disabilities, which would guide the development of new legislation, as well as the review and establishment of minimum norms and standards in that regard. A national framework on self-representation by persons with disabilities would also be finalized in 2018.

19. South Africa attached priority to the disaggregation of data by disability status as a means of informing programme planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation within fiscal constraints. Her Government continued to develop its Disability Inequality Index, which, beginning in 2018, would include financial data.

20. Public-private partnerships, whether aimed at promoting regulatory measures or corporate social investment, were important for accelerating implementation of the Convention. One such partnership, led by a South Africa-based telecommunications company, had resulted in the roll-out of accessible multimedia information and communications technology (ICT) centres in over 40 schools and community youth centres, which had improved educational outcomes for children with disabilities.

21. Following the conclusion in early 2018 of the arbitration process for the Life Esidimeni tragedy, in which 143 persons with psychosocial disabilities had passed away, the arbitrator had awarded significant constitutional damages to survivors and the families of the deceased. As a corrective measure, the Government was thoroughly reviewing electoral legislation and related processes in order to identify limitations faced by persons with disabilities. Appropriate recourse against injustice for persons with disabilities was guaranteed under the justice system.

22. The fact that no women had been elected to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016 had undermined States parties' commitments to gender equality. States must therefore take into account the need for gender parity in proposing candidates for future elections. In that connection, the recent election to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez, Vice President of the European Disability Forum, should encourage States parties to promote the equal participation of women with disabilities at the national level.

23. The recent increase in human rights violations against persons with albinism in South Africa had led the Government to re-examine the measures in place to protect their rights. Law enforcement officials had been responding rapidly to abductions, murders and the theft of human remains, and awareness campaigns had multiplied. Moreover, South Africa would fully implement the 2017–2021 Regional Action Plan on Albinism in Africa.

24. In conclusion, her delegation supported the calls by States parties at recent sessions of the Conference to review the Conference agenda in order to increase its focus on outcomes for the United Nations system as a whole.

25. **Mr. Lekarev** (Russian Federation) said that his Government had requested relevant federal ministries to draft the laws needed to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, following the Committee's consideration of his country's initial report on implementation of the Convention at its nineteenth session (CRPD/C/RUS/1).

26. In its follow-up work, his Government would particularly focus on promoting further deinstitutionalization and assisting persons with complex mental disorders to exercise their legal capacity. It was continuing to overhaul the comprehensive rehabilitation system, including through measures to improve the accessibility of rehabilitation services and to assist families of children with disabilities. A nationwide organization to support parents of children with mental disabilities had also been established. In addition, the Government was promoting early intervention services, social support, assisted living and employment assistance for persons with disabilities and was focusing on improving the arrangements in place for caregiving and the provision of social services for persons with disabilities. A plan to provide vocational training and employment assistance to youth with disabilities by 2020 was being developed. Moreover, the national programme on accessibility, for which an unprecedented level of funding had been allocated, had been extended from 2020 to 2025.

27. In preparing national legislation to implement the Convention, the Government would pay special attention to the issues raised by the Committee in its recommendations, particular with regard to employment for persons with disabilities. Information from the Committee on the best practices used by other countries for the implementation of the Convention would also be welcome.

28. **Mr. Carroll** (Observer for Disabled Peoples' International) said that his organization promoted the human rights of persons with disabilities, with an emphasis on full participation, equal opportunities and development. It was the only global cross-disability organization of persons with disability with a presence

in six regions worldwide and in which all types of disabilities were represented.

29. To achieve the goals of leaving no one behind, promoting equal recognition of persons with disabilities before the law, and empowering women and girls with disabilities, States parties must eliminate discrimination and make reasonable accommodations, as required under the Convention. Furthermore, under article 33 of the Convention, organizations representing persons with disabilities were responsible for holding States parties to account for fulfilling their obligations.

30. While commending the 177 States that had ratified the Convention and acknowledging the implementation efforts undertaken, he emphasized the need to eliminate the remaining physical, social, legal, attitudinal, medical and cultural barriers faced by persons with disabilities, in particular in the global South, as such barriers hindered implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. His organization was committed to monitoring and facilitating progress towards removing those barriers, starting at the current session of the Conference, where participants with disabilities had faced constraints owing to limited conference room space and the issuance of grounds passes at prohibitively early hours. Failure to make reasonable accommodations at future Conferences would undermine States parties' commitment to leaving no one behind.

31. **Ms. Demir** (Belgium) said that Belgium was committed to leaving no one behind, in line with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda, and to mainstreaming disability in policies at all levels. Systematically assessing the impact of decisions on disability issues nevertheless remained a challenge. Given the critical importance of investment and political commitment in ensuring full participation, her Government had established social protection schemes, as well as financial and fiscal advantages, for persons with disabilities, and had provided support for their inclusion in the areas of education, employment and leisure.

32. To promote awareness of disability issues, the political participation of persons with disabilities should be increased, a particularly pressing challenge in view of the upcoming elections in Belgium in 2018 and 2019, and the European Parliament elections in 2019. The National High Council for Persons with Disabilities had recently presented a position paper on elections and, for the first time, persons with visual impairment would be able to vote independently in the upcoming local elections in Belgium using an audio module.

33. Particular attention should be paid to accessibility and the needs of women and girls with disabilities, who often faced multiple forms of discrimination and were twice as likely as their male counterparts to be victims of violence and sexual abuse. In that connection, her Government had co-organized a side event to the Conference during which the topic of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls with disabilities would be addressed.

34. Fair representation of persons with disabilities and equitable gender balance in the membership of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities must be ensured. Belgium was preparing its second report on implementation of the Convention and welcomed the simplified reporting procedure adopted by the Committee in 2013. The Committee's evaluation of the second report of Belgium and the contributions of civil society and the independent mechanism established pursuant to article 33 of the Convention would help to guide future implementation efforts.

35. **Mr. Bahari** (Kenya) said that his Government, in conjunction with the Government of the United Kingdom and the International Disability Alliance, would host the first ever Global Disability Summit in London in July 2018.

36. The principle of universal social participation was enshrined in his country's Constitution. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection was responsible for implementing the Convention, in collaboration with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. The Government had enacted policies and legislation to promote the empowerment of persons with disabilities, including quota schemes to ensure their access to employment and government procurement opportunities; tax relief and social protection schemes; grants for income-generating programmes; and provisions for enhanced access to health-care services and education. However, more needed to be done to address the needs of persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

37. As part of the newly launched education sector policy for learners and trainees with disabilities, the President of Kenya had directed the Ministry of Education and the National Treasury to develop a plan to establish centres of excellence in order to facilitate early identification, assessment, placement and referral of children with disabilities. In addition, to facilitate inclusive planning, the Government had incorporated the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability in its 2019 housing and population census. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics had also established a committee, 70 per cent of whose members were persons with disabilities or representatives of

related organizations. Kenya remained committed to the full implementation of the Convention, although funding remained an obstacle to ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the implementation and monitoring process.

38. **Ms. Gamlin** (India) said that the commitment to leaving no one behind was critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. With one in five of the world's poorest people living with disabilities, the degree of empowerment of persons with disabilities was a touchstone for measuring the inclusiveness of social and economic progress. Efforts must be made to capitalize on areas of synergy between the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals, including the promotion of equal opportunities for, and non-discrimination against, persons with disabilities, in particular women and children, and the mainstreaming of accessibility requirements.

39. In 1995, India had enacted specific legislation to fulfil its constitutional mandate of ensuring freedom, justice and equality for all individuals, including persons with disabilities. It had also been among the first countries to ratify the Convention. The Prime Minister of India was committed to broadening awareness and eliminating the social stigma faced by persons with disabilities, having coined a Hindi term meaning "persons with divine qualities" to refer to them.

40. In 2017, India had adopted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, which expanded the definition of disability to include developmental, intellectual and locomotor disabilities, as well as hearing and visual impairment. The Act established quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities, and for their enrolment in educational institutions and inclusion in poverty alleviation schemes. It also provided for the allotment of land for housing for persons with disabilities; the provision of loans at concessional interest rates to help them start businesses; and the formulation by the Government of standards of accessibility for built environments, transportation, ICT and public services. Public-private partnerships had proven effective in ensuring the employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, in 2015 the Prime Minister had launched a campaign to create barrier-free access for persons with disabilities to public and virtual spaces.

41. In line with its commitment to ensuring the accessibility of health-care and early intervention services, the Government had recently launched a national health protection scheme that provided health insurance coverage for persons with disabilities. During the previous four years, the Government had distributed aids and assistive devices to approximately 1 million persons with disabilities. It was also providing support for cochlear implant surgery for hearing-impaired children, and had established scholarship programmes for students with disabilities pursuing professional and technical studies. Moreover, a research and training centre for Indian Sign Language had been established and a dictionary of Indian Sign Language containing 3,000 words had been developed.

42. In 2016, India had become the first country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled, and had established an online library of accessible books. Efforts were also being made to adapt yoga and traditional Indian medicine to support the well-being of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, a national database for the issuance of unique identification cards for persons with disabilities was being developed.

43. India was committed to enabling persons with disabilities to lead lives of dignity and purpose and to contribute to national social and economic development. Prior to the Conference, a side event had been held commemorating 50 years of the Jaipur foot, a prosthetic leg developed in India that had helped millions worldwide. During the Conference, his delegation would participate in another side event highlighting the role of mobile technology in empowering persons with disabilities.

44. **Ms. Dembélé** (Burkina Faso) said that, in ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocol in 2009, her Government had demonstrated political will at the highest level to promote social inclusion and reduce inequality, in line with the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2016–2018.

45. With technical and financial support from its development partners, the Government had established a State secretariat to support persons with disabilities, as well as a multisectoral national council to protect their rights, which had an operational standing secretariat. In 2018, the Cabinet had adopted the official report of Burkina Faso on the implementation of the Convention, which would soon be submitted to the United Nations. In addition, civil service examinations for persons with disabilities had been organized; over $5 million had been invested between 2013 and 2017 to support the needs of persons with disabilities; and a general census focusing on children with disabilities had been conducted in 2013. A national forum on the socioeconomic empowerment of persons with disabilities was also planned.

46. Bilateral and multilateral partners, together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), must provide increased support for the efforts of the national ministry on disability, inter alia: to ensure the economic empowerment of 40,000 persons with disabilities by 2020; to conduct a general population and housing census in 2018; and to establish and implement a national framework to support the employment of persons with disabilities.

47. **Mr. Clarke** (Observer for the European Disability Forum) expressed gratitude to the Bureau of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for its engagement with the disability movement in organizing the Conference. The European Disability Forum, an independent NGO led by persons with disabilities and their families, represented the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities and their representative organizations. Ireland had ratified the Convention in March 2018, resulting in universal ratification within the European Union. All European Union member States must translate their commitments into action and all States parties must withdraw their reservations and interpretative declarations in order to fully implement the Convention.

48. The engagement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, through such events as the annual civil society forum that preceded the Conference, was essential to the implementation of the Convention. Regional integration organizations, in particular the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), had a key role to play in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. All such organizations must ratify the Convention as a matter of priority in order to strengthen harmonization of laws and policies, as well as cooperation in implementation and monitoring, at the regional level. In their national budgets and in international cooperation, States parties must allocate financial resources in support of persons with disabilities; promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities; ensure the legal capacity and equal recognition before the law of persons with disabilities; and enhance accessibility.

49. **Mr. Skaug** (Norway) said that the Convention provided an international framework for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities to personal development, participation and self-realization. Persons with disabilities must play a role in developing the policies and programmes that affected them and in ensuring that disability issues were mainstreamed, particularly in the Sustainable Development Goals. Continued efforts to combat negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities and promote awareness of disability issues were also required. Furthermore, improving the quality and comparability of disability statistics was critical to monitoring progress towards inclusion. Lastly, for women and girls with disabilities to be empowered and included in society, it was vital to ensure their equal access to education, employment and justice, and their equal recognition before the law.

50. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka) said that, in order to ensure that no one was left behind, high-quality disability statistics and disaggregated data by disability status would greatly facilitate policymaking and the effective and efficient allocation of resources.

51. In Sri Lanka, persons with disabilities accounted for 8.7 per cent of the population. While his country had only ratified the Convention in 2016, it had adopted national legislation in 1996 covering the issues of rehabilitation, education, employment and health for persons with disabilities and it had established a national council and a national secretariat for persons with disabilities. National action plans focusing on employment, accessibility, vocational training and community-based rehabilitation for persons with disabilities, as well as special programmes benefiting women and children with disabilities, were also in place. Furthermore, guided by the criteria set out in the Convention, the recently launched National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2017–2021 built on existing disability initiatives, providing for, inter alia, greater infrastructural accessibility and enhanced awareness.

52. **Mr. Dusel** (Germany) said that Germany had stepped up its efforts to implement the Convention in recent years, both at the national level and in its international cooperation. The quality of life of persons with disabilities in Germany had improved as a result of the recent amendment to the Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons Act and the adoption of the Federal Participation Act, whereby persons with disabilities no longer had to submit several applications to different benefit agencies, and, when they claimed benefits, their partners' income was no longer taken into account. New job opportunities for persons with disabilities were also being created in companies. Furthermore, pursuant to the Equal Opportunities for Disabled Persons Act, an arbitration service had been established within the office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Relating to Persons with Disabilities, which would enable the out-of-court settlement of disputes on accessibility matters between persons with disabilities and public sector bodies.

53. More than half of the measures established under the second national action plan for implementation of

the Convention had been carried out. Implementation of the Convention ranked high on the Government's agenda and the second plan would be updated to include a focus on enhancing the access of persons with disabilities to digital technologies, in particular in the workplace, and on establishing an integrated, efficient and service-oriented public administration, in accordance with the principle of "nothing about us without us". Moreover, under the national development policy, increased funding was being provided for ICT, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

54. Lastly, in view of the importance of representation at the local and international levels, he welcomed the election at the current session of the Conference of several women to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and encouraged States parties to restore gender balance on the Committee in future elections.

55. **Mr. Makni** (Observer for the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions) said that national human rights institutions played a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the Convention, which included developing monitoring frameworks, advising States on how to meet their monitoring obligations and ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

56. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Global Alliance had held their first joint meeting in February 2018 in order to share experiences in a number of areas, including the collection of disaggregated-data; the elaboration of a framework to improve outcomes for persons with disabilities; the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into monitoring methodologies; and the development of guidance for national human rights institutions to monitor progress in the implementation of the Convention.

57. That joint meeting had concluded with the adoption of a landmark joint declaration setting out a road map to strengthen cooperation between the Committee, national human rights institutions and the Global Alliance in monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. Accordingly, the Committee and the Global Alliance had resolved: to establish a follow-up group to develop a common framework for monitoring article 19 of the Convention; to advocate for strengthened data collection; to invite the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in cooperation with national human rights institutions and their networks, to develop and maintain a repository of good practices for monitoring implementation of the Convention and continue strengthening the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities; and to request that international development cooperation efforts, through capacity-building programmes, should focus on enhancing and promoting the role of national human rights institutions and independent monitoring frameworks in monitoring the Convention.

58. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland) said that his Government stood ready to support efforts to ensure system-wide respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. His Government had recently published a national plan consisting of 80 actions to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The plan provided tools and indicators to implement the provisions of the Convention, and relevant actors, including organizations of persons with disabilities, would monitor and report on the implementation process.

59. The data collected via the 2017 national School Health Promotion study, which was partially based on the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, revealed that children and youth with disabilities faced more discrimination and bullying than other people. His Government would use that data to develop relevant policies. Data on women and girls with disabilities, who often fell victim to multiple forms of discrimination, were also needed. Collective action should be taken to ensure that they had access to affordable, high-quality services in order to exercise their sexual and reproductive health rights.

60. **Mr. Torem** (Israel) said that much had changes in the lives of persons with disabilities in Israel since the adoption of the Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act in 1998, including substantial improvements in accessibility, educational achievements and participation in employment. Most important of all, Israeli society had become much more aware of the rights of persons with disabilities.

61. Israel had a long tradition of grass-roots movements and activism, with disability activists and NGOs spearheading many initiatives to ensure inclusion and accessibility and to combat discrimination. Persons with disabilities were now involved in all changes to legislation and regulations, and policymakers and inspectors were working diligently to correct the lack of inclusive and accessible environments at the local and national levels.

62. Over the past year his Government had enacted specific regulations to promote mainstream schooling, thereby safeguarding fundamental rights and ensuring that no one would be left behind. It had also developed legislation and programmes to foster equal opportunity employment and was fully committed to meeting the relevant targets that had been set.

63. Major challenges lay ahead, but strong societies were built on equal rights, opportunities and inclusion. To inspire real social change and achieve full and equal rights for all people, the international community should work together.

64. **Mr. Rubisch** (Austria) said that his Government was committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the basis of its National Action Plan on Disability 2012–2020. A mid-term review of that latter undertaken in 2017 had revealed that progress had been achieved in many areas.

65. Austria attached great importance to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and had taken several steps to further the implementation of the Convention. In October 2017 the Austrian Parliament had adopted a package which strengthened the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, expanded legal remedies against discrimination on the grounds of disability and created the legal basis for quality statistics on disability. In addition, following the revision of the previous guardianship system in cooperation with persons with disabilities, a new adult protection law centred on autonomy, self-determination and decision-making guidance would soon enter into force. A study had also been initiated to examine the conditions under which persons with disabilities could be subject to violence and abuse, how such mistreatment could be prevented and what the current examples of best practice were. Lastly, to reinforce a positive image of persons with disabilities as human rights holders, his Government had created recommendations for disability-sensitive reporting in the media.

66. **Ms. Sepuloni** (New Zealand), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities, said that further system-wide action should be taken to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure their challenges were addressed. Recognizing the leadership role taken by the President of the General Assembly in ensuring that meetings were both accessible and inclusive, the Group welcomed the construction work that would shortly be undertaken to improve accessibility to the General Assembly Hall and called for such measures to continue as part of an ongoing process within the United Nations.

67. As the United Nations should exemplify best practices with regard to the appropriate implementation of the Convention, discussions should extend well beyond the realm of physical accessibility to include all other elements outlined therein. The Secretary-General's new system-wide policy was commendable in that regard and would help to strengthen and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities. The international community could not fulfil its promise to leave no one behind if it failed to address the unique challenges faced by persons with disabilities. Their rights should be recognized in all United Nations processes, including reforms, and in such intergovernmental negotiations as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees.

68. It was regrettable that the requirement to disaggregate data by disability had not yet been fulfilled. While the Statistical Commission had made a commendable effort to convene a group of experts to produce relevant guidelines, progress had been slow. The Group nevertheless welcomed the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability as an appropriate, broadly tested, easy-to-implement and resource-efficient way to produce internationally comparable data.

69. Persons with disabilities were well represented in the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; such representation, in addition to gender parity and equitable geographical representation, should continue.

70. **Ms. Santegoeds** (Observer for the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry), speaking also on behalf of the Centre for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, said that the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability did not take into account persons with psychosocial disabilities. Its use would therefore lead State officials and the public to believe that persons with psychosocial disabilities either did not have disabilities or that they were irrelevant. That omission left States unable to gather data on the extent to which persons with psychosocial disabilities were able to enjoy their rights and, consequently, without the tools necessary to remedy situations of rights deprivation. It was not acceptable to leave persons with psychosocial disabilities behind or to treat them as an afterthought; nor was it acceptable to assume that their needs or experiences were identical to those of other groups that would be counted.

71. It was deeply disappointing that States had not followed through with their commitments to end forced treatments, institutionalization, guardianship and substitute decision-making. Persons with psychosocial disabilities were under constant threat of being removed from their homes and placed under the control of others who had power to do whatever they wanted under the guise of "treatment". That included such inhuman and degrading treatment as the use of restraints, isolation, mind-numbing drugs and electroshock, which amounted to torture and arbitrary detention. How could States

parties to the Convention actively promote and enforce the worst kinds of abuse against persons with psychosocial disabilities?

72. Most people with psychosocial disabilities lived in poverty, and many were excluded from work due to discriminatory hiring practices and the denial of reasonable accommodation. Many remained institutionalized because there was no social assistance framework to provide housing and income, both of which were survival needs, not mental-health needs. Those issues remained isolated from mainstream disability rights policies and were generally placed under the jurisdiction of health ministries. Like other persons with disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities were not ill, and they insisted on the full enjoyment of the human rights guaranteed under the Convention.

73. Forced institutionalization and forced treatment were practiced and even authorized legally in certain countries with mental-health systems. In some cases, even in countries that had ratified the Convention, legal reform led to the expansion of options for forced treatment. A point of particular concern was the elaboration by the Council of Europe of an Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention) on the protection of the dignity and fundamental rights of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary treatment and placement. If adopted, the Additional Protocol would not guarantee rights or dignity; instead it would legitimize grave human-rights violations, discrimination and the ill-treatment of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

74. **Ms. Duncan** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Global Action on Disability Network, said that the Network, as a forum for the exchange of ideas, best practices and lessons learned in such priority areas as inclusive education, humanitarian action and social protection, was a concrete example of international cooperation and collective advocacy in action.

75. Disability-disaggregated data were needed urgently to be able to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, the Network supported the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability as a relatively simple, efficient and cost-effective data tool.

76. The Network strongly supported the efforts of the United Kingdom, within the framework of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, to establish a policy marker to track development financing that promoted the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities. That important mechanism also helped to identify key gaps that would inform future policy and programme development.

77. The Governments of the United Kingdom and Kenya and the members of the International Disability Alliance were demonstrating commendable leadership, both in hosting the Global Disability Summit in July 2018 and through their concrete actions to ensure that persons with disabilities were included in, and benefited equally from, sustainable development efforts.

78. **Ms. Prentice** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Turkey, said that the overarching theme of the current session and the cross-cutting focus on the importance of high-quality disability statistics were both welcome. In that context, Member States should collect and analyse disability-disaggregated data, including through the use of surveys like the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, to monitor implementation of the Convention and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

79. The interplay between poverty and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination resulted in limited agency and constrained opportunities for economic, political and social advancement for women and girls with disabilities and hindered their ability to fully enjoy their rights. More should be done to strengthen their rights and ensure their full and equal participation.

80. Their countries were committed to working together and with bilateral and multilateral partners, among others, to achieve real, sustainable progress. Persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in particular, should play a central role in the development and implementation of strong, informed, appropriate and beneficial policies and legislation.

81. Lastly, their countries welcomed efforts to improve access throughout the United Nations system for persons with disabilities, including conference facilities and service. They were committed to eliminating obstacles to accessing justice faced by persons with disabilities, to facilitating their role as direct and indirect participants, and to ensuring their ability to seek and obtain appropriate legal remedies on an equal basis with others.

82. **Mr. Portillo Romero** (Peru) said that his Government was continuing its efforts to harmonize national legislation with the principles of the Convention. To address the tightly linked dynamic of disability and poverty, a variety of social programmes

had been implemented, including free public transport and a non-contributory allowance for persons with severe disabilities in situations of extreme poverty.

83. Peru would ensure the sustainability of its disability policies by continuing to fund budgetary programmes in the areas of education, health and work. Educational policies were geared towards combatting stigmatization and misconceptions and promoting peaceful coexistence in schools. A set of guidelines for the inclusion of students with disabilities had recently been adopted.

84. In its efforts to promote inclusion, Peru had embarked on a series of consultations with persons with disabilities prior to the adoption of relevant programmes and policies. One such policy offered legal support to safeguard the rights, wishes and preferences of persons with disabilities.

85. Recognizing persons with disabilities as a rich part of the diversity of humankind, and their potential to be agents of change, Peru reaffirmed its commitment to implementing cross-cutting disability-aware polices and urged the international community to raise disability awareness and promote inclusive sustainable development.

86. **Ms. Juan López** (Mexico) said that her Government was firmly committed to the implementation of the Convention and had submitted its second and third consolidated reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Those reports contained substantive information about the relevant national actions, plans, programmes and legislative frameworks adopted by Mexico in the context of its compliance with the Convention.

87. Mexico had made significant progress in establishing its national system for the development and inclusion of persons with disabilities. In that regard a multidimensional inclusion strategy had been adopted to combine the efforts and resources of the Government and civil society with a view to reducing the poverty gap. In terms of concrete achievements, her Government had managed to lower the barriers to access to health services from 16.4 percent in 2014 to 12 per cent in 2016; barriers to access to education from 51.1 per cent in 2014 to 48 per cent in 2016; and persons with disabilities enjoyed increased access to employment, with the 2014 indicator of 32.5 having risen to 39.04 in 2016. Furthermore, registries of persons with disabilities had been integrated, in part through the incorporation of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability. With 4 million people having been identified thus far, work on statistical analysis was forthcoming. The National Council for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was strengthening the institutional work undertaken to meet relevant commitments, in particular the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

88. **Mr. Pintus** (Observer for Progetto Filippide), drawing attention to articles 6, 7 and 30 of the Convention, which pertained to the interests of women and children with disabilities and ensuring access to recreation, said that the inclusion of such persons was a particular priority for Progetto Filippide — a sports programme for persons with autism and rare diseases. The specific right to sport for persons with disabilities, particularly young women and girls, would be addressed at a conference on sports and inclusion to be held later in the year in Rome, which he invited all Committee members to attend.

89. **Ms. Mlakar** (Slovenia) said that her Government was committed to implementing the Convention and its Optional Protocol. In line with its Constitution and the precepts of the Constitutional Court, Slovenia had taken steps to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoyed equality and led decent lives, including through the adoption of the Protection against Discrimination Act and the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act. The Government had also recently passed the Personal Assistance Act, which allowed persons with a variety of impairments to receive help with tasks and activities that could not otherwise be completed, thus allowing them to live more independent and active lives.

90. Her Government would continue its efforts to achieve greater social integration of persons with disabilities and to improve the regulation of disability-related issues. To that end, even closer cooperation would be needed between ministries, governmental institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders.

91. **Ms. Covalschi** (Argentina) said that greater effort should be made to ensure that persons with disabilities fully enjoyed their rights, particularly with respect to economic and social participation and inclusion. Since ratifying the Convention Argentina had worked to mainstream its principles into national legislation. In that context, a national disability agency had been created in 2017 to ensure greater autonomy and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities while improving their quality of life.

92. Under the 2017 national disability plan, her Government had sought to elaborate policies that promoted the full social inclusion of persons with disabilities. In that context, an interministerial commission on disability had been created to improve

coordinated efforts to ensure full participation by, and equal rights for, all persons with disabilities. Moreover, in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the entire international community had a unique opportunity to mainstream a disability perspective in public policy with a view to achieving sustainable, inclusive and rights-based development.

93. **Ms. Grau** (Uruguay) said that her Government was committed to creating a country where persons with disabilities could effectively exercise their rights. An arsenal of social reform, cross-cutting policies and relevant programmes and institutions, among others, would safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, ensure their access to justice and legal protection, increase their autonomy and augment the visibility of the challenges they faced. For example, under the national disability programme, a three-pronged project had been implemented to systematize the collection of data, address violence and disability, with an emphasis on gender violence, and provide universal access to health care.

94. Uruguay had achieved progress in instituting a national integrated system of care, mainstreaming disability and a gender perspective in policies, implementing provisions for mothers with disabilities, and providing health care, education and employment. Her Government would continue the process begun with its ratification of the Convention, ensuring that issues of disability were mainstreamed in ministry policies.

95. **Mr. Duarte Lopes** (Portugal) said that his Government was strongly committed to implementing the Convention. Two measures announced at the previous year's Conference had yielded positive results: 75,000 persons with disabilities were now covered by the social provision for inclusion, a number that was set to increase to 160,000 beneficiaries by the end of 2018; and the new model of support for independent living had led to the establishment of countrywide centres to assist persons with disabilities in their daily activities.

96. Portugal had an inclusive school system that integrated 98 per cent of students with special needs. His Government was working to tackle all remaining situations of non-inclusion and had tasked a working group to present a legislative proposal focusing on student potential rather than deficits. That proposal would guarantee the flexible management of the curriculum, allowing students to complete 12 years of mandatory education. It also reinforced the rights of students and their families to be actively involved in the educational process.

97. Well-tailored integrated policies were necessary to effectively respond to the challenges and constraints faced by persons with disabilities. Only in that way could the international community ensure that no one was left behind and that disability and diversity were handled in a positive manner.

98. **Mr. Zehnder** (Switzerland) said that his Government had understood the importance of international collaboration, its application to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities having produced many fruitful exchanges with State party representatives. Cooperation between the various treaty bodies was important to ensure the cross-cutting implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities and to consolidate the link between the Convention and other human rights treaties. However, collaboration among various actors at the national level was also crucial. For persons with disabilities to lead autonomous lives, they must be able to make choices for themselves. That meant including them, their representative organizations and all relevant public and private partners so that the services provided were sufficiently flexible and adapted to individual needs. Thus, cooperation at both the national and international levels was essential in order to develop solutions and advance the full implementation of the Convention.

99. **Mr. Kagonye** (Zimbabwe) said that his country had made progress in enacting legislation compliant with the Convention since ratifying it in 2013. For example, the Disabled Persons Act provided for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, while the Labour Act had been amended in line with the Convention to incorporate international labour standards. In addition, a department had been created to handle disability issues. His Government was also establishing a national database for persons with disabilities and, under Zimbabwe Agenda for Socioeconomic Transformation, was dedicating resources to improve the lives of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Some 10 per cent of the Basic Education Assistance Module was being allocated to increase access to education for children with disabilities, and his Government was making ongoing efforts to raise awareness and educate the nation at large at national events. One such event was a campaign launched in conjunction with a local mining company to demystify misconceptions and myths about albinism.

100. **Ms. Heumann** (Observer for Humanity and Inclusion) said that, after 35 years as Handicap International, the organization had recently changes its name to Humanity and Inclusion in order to better reflect the diversity of its mandate. Guided by a people-centred approach, Humanity and Inclusion supported the efforts of persons with disabilities, representative

organizations, service providers and States in the implementation of the Convention with a view to achieving fully inclusive societies.

101. Humanity and Inclusion specifically supported the implementation of the Convention by actively contributing to the goal of leaving no one behind and to disaster risk reduction efforts. Other key projects included work with women with disabilities to tackle the violence and discrimination they experienced; the upcoming release of a report on the intersectionality of gender and disability; and collaboration with the Washington Group to improve disability inclusion in data and statistics. The organization's inclusive political participation projects empowered affected populations in gathering evidence for accountability.

102. Welcoming the election to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez, the first woman with a disability to serve on that Committee, she also wished to congratulate the numerous other women with disabilities who had just been elected to serve on the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

103. **Mr. Somsri** (Thailand) said that his Government had fulfilled 80 per cent of its commitment under the employment quota system for persons with disabilities and was intent on reaching 100 per cent through job coaching. He also wished to point out the draft amendments had been proposed to the National Copyright Act, moving the Thai Government closer to ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. Furthermore, the Second Strategic Plan on the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities was being implemented across the country, and a database on persons with disabilities was linked to civil registration and the public health-care system. Lastly, Thailand was continuing to work closely with organizations of persons with disabilities and intended to push forward an agenda to mainstream disability issues in 2019 as Chair of ASEAN.

104. **Mr. Locsin, Jr.** (Philippines) said that his Government recognized persons with disabilities as both agents and beneficiaries of development who had the potential to make outstanding contributions to society. Since ratifying the Convention, the Philippines had made consistent efforts to include persons with disabilities in all State programmes. In addition to ensuring accessibility to all public places for persons with disabilities, his Government had established special education facilities for them, provided them with employment assistance and access to free health care, and had mandated local government units to involve them in the management of the Persons with Disability Affairs Office. Furthermore, persons with disabilities received a distinct identity card awarding them privileges and discounted services and goods; a gender-, development- and disability-based approach was being implemented to integrate disabilities with gender issues; and the Women with Disabilities Day was held on the last Monday of March every year as an opportunity to break common misconceptions and highlight the role of women with disabilities in development.

105. His Government wished to emphasize that the collection of relevant data was critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities and that it looked forward to the coming release of the United Nations flagship report on disability and development.

106. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Colombia) said that, as part of the continued commitment to eradicating all forms of poverty and reducing inequities, it would be necessary to identify and overcome the remaining challenges so that persons with disabilities could fully enjoy their rights and fundamental freedoms. Implementing the 2030 Agenda was also essential in creating conditions conducive to the development of persons with disabilities. Leaving no one behind meant using a development model that empowered such persons and allowed them to become agents of change.

107. Nationally, 86 per cent of persons with disabilities lived in poverty, particularly in rural areas, and 46 per cent participated in social assistance programmes. There was a clear need to focus on that group. The State should not act alone; instead, international and civil society organizations, academia and the private sector should contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

108. With Colombia undergoing one of the most significant processes in its history, his Government knew that only by empowering the various population groups to build a better country could real change be achieved. The process was long and the disparities numerous, but his Government was taking the necessary measures to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities, irrespective of gender, age or type of disability.

109. The international community should look for innovative solutions to old and new challenges, and their implementation should result in improved conditions in each State. Using all the tools available to it, the international community would leave no one behind.

110. **Ms. Díaz Aguirre** (Panama) said that the Convention was leading to a paradigm shift, with the

focus being placed on equality, non-discrimination and the participation persons with disabilities and their representative organizations. Certain factors were known to limit the full implementation of the Convention; for example, women with disabilities faced a high degree of discrimination. In response, her Government had adopted equal opportunities legislation for women that took into account recommendations to protect young girls and adolescents. Furthermore, in response to assertions that there would be a greater number than ever of persons with disabilities by 2030, Panama had enacted legislation to provide protection for that population. It also had concrete policies for employment quotas in the public and private sectors, among other measures.

111. The vicious circle of poverty and disability could be linked to inadequate access to health services. Since 2012, Panama had an electronic system to collect statistics on health and, with regard to the legal capacity of persons with disabilities, a working group had been appointed to revise an amendment to the Civil Code.

112. **Ms. Alharis** (Jordan) said that in 2017 her Government had adopted legislation to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities. As the first such legislation in the region and a model at the international level, it offered a clear definition of disability; criminalized disability-based exclusion; took into account environmental and social obstacles; and recognized temporary disability and the rights arising therefrom.

113. In using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability to collect data during its latest housing and population census, her Government had ascertained that 11.2 per cent of the population over 5 years of age had a disability. Equipped with that data, it was coordinating the work of various agencies to ensure the full implementation of the relevant legislation, in particular national policies in four priority areas. Steps were also being taken to issue a national identity card later in the year.

114. Her Government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda was reflected in its national development plan, which would strengthen the Jordanian economy and its capacity to provide jobs and health care for all. Her delegation looked forward to presenting the fruits of such initiatives at the next Conference.

115. **Mr. Valero** (Spain) said that Spain had achieved progress in such areas as universal employment and respect for the rights of women and children with disabilities; however, more remained to be done at the national and global levels. While it was important to recognize that the needs of persons with disabilities differed from one country or region to another, one certainty was that they each had a right to autonomy. In Spain, any individual had the right to free assistance, a service made possible by European cooperation.

116. Universal training programmes to prevent disability, assist in rehabilitation, provide access and ensure inclusion in all areas, particularly employment and education, were necessary to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. Discrimination was rampant and persons with disability remained isolated from many opportunities. However, awareness was growing: notably, discussions were taking place in Spain around cognitive accessibility, with relevant initiatives being implemented.

117. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said that her Government's policies sought to ensure the full social and economic participation of persons with disabilities through, inter alia, subsidized housing, transport and medical services. Henceforth, newly built apartments were required to be adapted to the needs of persons with reduced mobility. A special family caregiver status had been established to guarantee that families had the necessary safeguards to care for children with disabilities. A disability compensation aid plan was in place for the special education of minor and adults with disabilities. Furthermore, a steering committee monitored the integration and access to employment for workers with disabilities.

118. Given the obstacles regularly faced by persons with disabilities that undermined their economic integration, resources and the exercise of their rights, including the right to be heard, her Government had enacted legal provisions to protect such persons from physical, psychological or sexual violence and from economic obstacles. Professionals in the justice, police, medical and social sectors received relevant mandatory training, and persons with disabilities could refer complaints to the High Commissioner for the Protection of Rights, Liberties and for Mediation if they believed themselves to be the victims of discrimination.

119. Lastly, Monaco commemorated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, held on 3 December every year, as part of its ongoing efforts to raise awareness of disability issues and mobilize sustained support in order to leave no one behind.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

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Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 June 2018, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Rohland (Acting Vice-President) ..... (Germany)

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In the absence of Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria), Mr Rohland (Germany), Acting Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that more political will was necessary to promote international cooperation, thereby improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities and increasing their social inclusion. It would be impossible to eliminate the discrimination faced by women and children with disabilities without first eliminating structural issues such as underdevelopment and social exclusion. Governments must work effectively to remove barriers preventing persons with disabilities from enjoying their right to active and full participation in decision-making processes on an equal footing with all citizens.

2. To achieve social development in Cuba, it was vital to protect and meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities. Such persons had inviolable rights and were beneficiaries of social programmes and public policies with universal coverage. However, the adverse effects of an unjust international economic order, compounded by the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America, had prevented the enhancement of social programmes for persons with disabilities in Cuba owing to a lack of sufficient resources. Nevertheless, the Government and people of Cuba were strongly committed to pursuing actions that would guarantee full respect for the dignity of persons with disabilities and the protection and promotion of all their rights.

3. **Ms. Nguyen** Phuong Nga (Viet Nam) said that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention converged in their ideas of equality and inclusivity, and the current discussion would help to reaffirm commitments, redouble efforts and reinforce actions to work towards truly leaving no one behind. In Viet Nam, equality and non-discrimination were guiding principles in the promotion and protection of the rights of all people. There were several programmes to support persons with disabilities as well as initiatives to promote their participation in social activities, such as centres promoting independence and providing knowledge and skills. The Government had established policies to encourage organizations and individuals to offer technical and financial support to persons with disabilities for education, vocational training, jobs creation and other services. In 2016, the first national survey on persons with disabilities had been conducted in Viet Nam and a set of indicators had been issued in 2017 to enable regular monitoring and reporting on the progress of implementing disability support policies.

4. **Ms. Tesoriero** (Observer for the New Zealand Human Rights Commission) said that various international reports had concluded that persons with disabilities generally suffered from poorer health, lower educational achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty. The Convention therefore remained as relevant as it had been a decade previously, and no one should be left behind in its implementation. The independent monitoring mechanism in New Zealand was working with the Government to make progress in the following priority areas: education, housing, employment, data, access to information, and seclusion and restraint.

5. The Commission was undertaking significant research into the attitudes that New Zealanders held. It had been discovered that negative responses to persons with disability were often exacerbated by discriminatory attitudes towards such persons with other identities, such as indigenous persons or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons. Furthermore, new risks were posed in the context of social media, which facilitated the bullying of persons with disabilities. It was a change in mindset, rather than a sense of moral obligation, that would allow persons with disabilities to be given key roles in policymaking, both in the public and private sectors. Hence the need to fully implement article 8 of the Convention, on awareness-raising.

6. **Ms. Alainchair** (Senegal) said that her Government had introduced various measures to implement the Convention. In particular, 50,000 equal opportunities cards had been issued between 2013 and 2017 in order to promote access to basic social services, including mutual health insurance programmes, family security grants and public transport services. Two important decisions had emerged from an interministerial meeting held on 13 February 2018, namely, to adopt implementing legislation by the end of the year for its Social Policy Act to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to mobilize resources to fund the National Disability Action Plan 2017–2021. Furthermore, Senegal had been chosen as the pilot country responsible for the implementation of the second phase of the African Union Disability Architecture project, and had held a regional training workshop for high-level officials on disability inclusion, bringing together some 25 countries.

7. **Mr. Lootah** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country had made significant progress in promulgating its Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities, and had passed legislation on equal opportunities in education. The previous year, his Government had launched a national policy to empower persons with disabilities, offering a national road map for building an inclusive society. Several steps had been taken to improve the situation of women with disabilities, including action by the national bank to support commercial opportunities. To fulfil the commitments enshrined in the Convention it would be necessary to think in new ways and explore the use of technology to support global efforts. Technology service centres had therefore been set up to put students with disabilities in contact with technology, and a more accurate database had been established to provide high-quality services to persons with disabilities through the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority. His Government also hoped to enable persons with disabilities to access sports and tourism facilities. In that context the Middle East North Africa Special Olympics Regional Games, held in Abu Dhabi in March 2018, had been good preparation for the Special Olympics World Games to be held in 2019.

8. **Ms. Tupi** (Observer for the World Federation of the Deaf) welcomed the proclamation in General Assembly resolution 72/161 of 23 September as International Day of Sign Languages, which represented an important step towards global recognition and respect for sign languages. The first International Day of Sign Languages would be held under the cross-cutting theme "With Sign Language, Everyone is Included". Unless information was made available to deaf persons through sign languages, the goal of leaving no one behind would not be achieved. Instead of asking hearing persons to speak on behalf of deaf persons, consultations should be held with national associations of the deaf and with deaf leaders themselves. A small number of countries had made the Convention available in their national sign languages, and more should do the same. A visual toolkit providing guidance and connecting the deaf community to the Convention and the Sustainable Development Goals would be launched on the World Federation of the Deaf website later that week.

9. **Mr. Ionatamishvili** (Georgia) said that his Government was responsible for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring a decent life for all, and no time should be lost in resolving those challenges. Under previous administrations persons with disabilities had received no support in exercising their rights to independent living, education and employment. No efforts had been made to increase access or adopt new legislation, and decisions had been made without the participation of disabled persons. The situation had changed in 2012 when the newly elected Government had declared the rights of persons with disabilities as a priority, leading to the ratification of the Convention, legal reform, increased levels of access, inclusive education, a programme of rehabilitation for children with autism and the Georgian Paralympic Movement. The constitutional reform process had included a provision on the obligation to create equal conditions for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, many challenges remained, including ongoing limitations to physical access and employment for disabled persons, obstacles to independent living, and a lack of promotion of inclusive education needs and development programmes. Such issues would be addressed through social reforms, strengthened social work, and the creation of legal guarantees and effective enforcement mechanisms.

10. **Mr. Hoshino** (Japan) said that, earlier that year, Japan had finalized its fourth five-year Basic Programme for Persons with Disabilities, which was the first programme to be realized since his country had ratified the Convention. To ensure consistency and respect for the principles of the Convention, persons with disabilities were engaged in the policymaking process and their decision-making power was respected. Taking effective measures through the "plan, do, check and act" cycle must be promoted to continue making progress on implementation. The current Basic Programme for Persons with Disabilities had established 112 benchmarks with concrete goals for evidence-based policymaking. Japan was working towards the elimination of barriers for persons with disabilities and would continue its efforts towards full implementation of the Convention.

11. **Ms. Ikupa Alex** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her country had ratified the Convention in 2009 and the following year had enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act, which focused on the promotion and protection of rights to health, accessibility, rehabilitation, education, employment and anti-discrimination measures. To ensure that no one was left behind, the Government was reviewing its policies on disability, employment and social security, providing technical and financial support to persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities, and had improved inclusive education and increased the provision of technical aid and assistive devices. In addition, national health exemption guidelines were being developed to facilitate access to health care for persons with disabilities, and it was mandatory for such persons to have at least 3 per cent representation in both public and private institutions; a national plan of action had been launched to end violence against women and children, including persons

with disabilities; vocational rehabilitation centres promoting self-reliance training had been established; and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism had visited Tanzania the previous year. Her Government was continuing to focus on collecting high-quality statistics and disaggregated data on disability, with a view to improving the data available on all disability groups. Her country required further support in moving towards a more inclusive society

12. **Mr. Yat Max** (Guatemala) said that Guatemala was a country living in a state of exclusion, having suffered recently from recurrent natural disasters and issues relating to industrial safety, violence and a lack of security. All such issues impacted persons with disabilities, who were themselves living in a state of exclusion on a daily basis. In the light of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the initial report of Guatemala (CRPD/C/GTM/CO/1), his Government had been working on an implementation plan that would be followed up in various public institutions. While progress had been made on the recommendations contained in the report, the Government would need to increase efforts to ensure that policies benefited persons with disabilities. Improved working methods were also needed to ensure that plans and projects were developed in the future. The Guatemalan Secretariat for Planning and Programming of the Presidency had therefore been working with various planners in public institutions in that regard.

13. **Ms. Dassama** (Sierra Leone) said that the presidential elections held in Sierra Leone earlier that year had ensured inclusive and accessible voting for persons with disabilities thanks to support from the international community. Psychosocial challenges in her country had been compounded following the floods and mudslides in Freetown the previous year, which had left some survivors with mobility-related disabilities and mental health issues. In response, her Government had strengthened psychosocial and protection interventions at all levels to ensure effective and efficient delivery of services. The President of Sierra Leone had recently pledged to review and implement policies and laws relating to disability, improve incentives for teachers in special needs institutions, provide free health care for persons with disabilities, and offer livelihood support for their economic improvement. Such a commitment would further strengthen existing national policies, including the Persons with Disability Act of 2011. Sierra Leone had demonstrated a strong commitment to international human rights instruments and treaties, particularly the Convention. Achievements included the campaign to strengthen capacity for working with autistic children in schools and in their communities; the finalization of the draft policy on inclusive education; and an ongoing review of the Lunacy Act for its alignment with ongoing mental health trends. Unfortunately, the headquarters of the National Commission for Persons with Disability had suffered a fire earlier that year, with huge implications for coordination, programme development and implementation, and corresponding consequences for the lives of persons with disabilities.

14. **Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) said that there was still a long way to go in achieving the permanent closure of all psychiatric hospitals worldwide, and to empower persons with mental and intellectual disabilities to exercise their rights and be fully involved in society. All Member States should follow the example of Italy as the first country to have passed a law to mark the end of mental asylums. Italy would remain at the forefront of promoting the rights of persons with disabilities within the international sphere. The rights of such persons, particularly those of women and girls, were one of the priorities of Italy as a candidate to the Human Rights Council for the term 2019–2021, and were at the core of the government agency Italian Development Cooperation and its projects. Italy followed a twin-track approach of promoting initiatives specifically addressing persons with disabilities in several countries, and of including persons with disabilities in the definition of all projects. It was important to continue defining innovative policies, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels, in order to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. In doing so, a truly participatory approach must be adopted in which all relevant stakeholders, chiefly persons with disabilities themselves, were included.

15. **Mr. Bauwens** (Observer for the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus) said that, with proper treatment and support, children with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus could thrive and live in equality with others. Children with disabilities were more likely to be unregistered than their peers without disabilities, which was a violation of article 18, paragraph 2, of the Convention which stated that children with disabilities should be registered immediately after birth and should have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by their parents. The fundamental right to birth registration was also recognized under article 24, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, under article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and under Sustainable Development Goal

target 16.9. Children with disabilities who were not registered at birth were at greater risk of neglect, institutionalization and even death. Acknowledging legal existence was vital for inclusion and access to such basic rights as health care. Every year, thousands of children with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus did not appear in statistics, did not receive proper treatment and care, and died prematurely. He looked forward to reading the report on the rights of persons with disabilities to the highest attainable standard of health, to be presented by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Registering children at birth was the first step in securing their recognition before the law, safeguarding their rights and ensuring that any violation of those rights was duly noted.

16. **Ms. Hendricks** (Jamaica) said that persons with disabilities were often left behind due to their vulnerability, and were negatively impacted by attitudes and environmental conditions. Their participation in society made a value contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such considerations had guided the policies and measures adopted by Jamaica through the Disabilities Act of 2014, which protected the rights of persons with disabilities and promoted their socioeconomic development. The national utilities regulator had developed a policy to increase social inclusion and enhance customer service for persons with disabilities. Her country was establishing a national identification system, which would help ensure that no one was left behind, assist with data collection and facilitate the allocation of benefits. Her Government had passed the Building Act of 2017 to improve accessibility to buildings, and had increased funds to provide support to students with disabilities. The Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities had launched a national awareness campaign to raise awareness of the Disabilities Act, educate persons with disabilities about their rights and encourage greater levels of inclusion. Jamaica was currently developing codes of practice to offer guidance on increasing the participation of persons with disabilities. Full and effective realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention required a comprehensive and integrated approach.

17. **Ms. Bogyay** (Hungary) said that her Government was committed to leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the Convention and believed that the political participation of persons with disabilities was key. Successful leadership from the disability community was embodied by Dr Ádám Kósa, the first Member of the European Parliament with a hearing impairment, and Dr László Lovászy, a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The previous year, Hungary had hosted the third International Conference of the World Federation of the Deaf. In order to leave no one behind, Hungary had planned for a full transition from institutional care to community-based services by 2036, which would benefit 10,000 persons with disabilities and would include supported and independent housing, professional training for human rights-based services and detailed assessments to tailor care to the needs of individuals. There was strong institutional support for the implementation of the Convention, through the National Council of Associations of Persons with Disabilities, and a thematic working group for the rights of persons with disabilities. Recommendations by the latter were submitted to a national expert group on disability which prepared strategic proposals, and to an interministerial committee on disability, which coordinated legal proposals and initiatives related to disability.

18. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia) said that the vulnerability of persons with disabilities was exacerbated in situations of poverty and inequality, and where there was a lack of social protection, which prevented such persons from developing the skills that would lead towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda. Changing attitudes and removing barriers that hindered persons with disabilities was necessary. The latest population census in Indonesia had shown that the country had some 20 million persons with disabilities, and the Convention had provided the Government with a platform to promote their well-being. In 2016, Indonesia had enacted Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which had shifted the national perspective towards a human rights-based approach, helping to ensure that national development programmes were inclusive and accessible. Her Government had also established a development plan in an effort to align the principles of inclusion and leaving no one behind. Indonesia had one of the highest rates of blindness in the world, and her Government understood the need to facilitate access to information and knowledge for persons with visual disabilities. It was therefore in the process of ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

19. **Mr. Jürgenson** (Estonia) said that the 2030 Agenda should be implemented within the framework of the Convention and should be disability-inclusive. Legislation reflecting the commitment of Estonia to the Convention included a regulation providing detailed requirements for buildings related to the needs of persons with disabilities; an amendment to the

Chancellor of Justice Act which would entrust the Chancellor of Justice with promoting, protecting and monitoring the implementation of the Convention; and a legislative act granting carers of persons with profound disabilities five additional days of care leave per year. The Ministry of Social Affairs had led a large-scale integrated campaign, created by persons with disabilities, to show the public their abilities in coping with everyday life. The well-being of persons with disabilities was the responsibility of all, and countries and organizations must implement integral approaches when developing policies. Leaving no one behind, including persons with disabilities, was an ethical imperative.

20. **Mr. Jia** Yong (China) said that, since ratifying the Convention, his Government had been actively fulfilling its obligations by submitting compliance reports for review by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. China had amended its law on the protection of persons with disabilities and its regulations for their education, and had promulgated its regulations on the construction of a barrier-free environment and on disability prevention. In 2015, China had established its goal of building a moderately prosperous society by 2020, leaving no persons with disabilities behind. Measures included the protection and improvement of the livelihoods of persons with disabilities, ensuring that they shared in social and economic development and prioritizing poverty reduction. China had established a dynamic database on the status and needs of persons with disabilities, which had informed national policymaking and enabled the creation of targeted services. Over 20 million persons with disabilities with financial difficulties or severe disabilities had benefited from subsidies from the State Council. His country had been working actively with the international community to incorporate disabilities into bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, including the holding of regular meetings with the United States of America on issues concerning persons with disabilities and the establishment of cooperation and exchange mechanisms with the Russian Federation and Australia. All States parties and all sectors of society must work towards achieving the goals related to persons with disabilities as part of the 2030 Agenda, and towards promoting the inclusive development of such persons.

21. **Mr. Suan** (Myanmar) said that since acceding to the Convention, Myanmar had been actively implementing steps towards its full realization. For example, a law to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities had been enacted in 2015, empowering such persons to take part in all spheres of social, economic, political and professional life. In addition, the National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Myanmar Federation of Persons with Disabilities had been established, and a national social protection plan had been adopted to meet the socioeconomic needs of citizens, particularly children, women, older persons and persons with disabilities. His Government had also been working with several regional and international organizations to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

22. The need to incorporate disability into future development efforts was evident from the nexus between disability and poverty. In that context, a socioeconomic environment providing equal job opportunities for persons with disabilities must be created, to ensure that no one was left behind. To that end, meetings had been held with private sector stakeholders to offer pre-job training courses and livelihood, income-generation and social protection programmes to persons with disabilities. A variety of programmes had also been carried out to raise public awareness of the need for persons with disabilities to enjoy equal rights and freedom from discrimination, neglect and violence.

23. **Mr. Bainbridge** (Observer for the Christian Blind Mission) said that his organization focused on creating an inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities could enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential. It was crucial for the Convention to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that no one was left behind. Furthermore, humanitarian aid and international cooperation must fully respect the rights of persons with disabilities and States not yet engaging in disability-inclusive humanitarian aid and international cooperation should start doing so. The meaningful and effective participation of persons with disabilities benefited society as a whole. To achieve such inclusion, collecting and enhancing data disaggregation was vital and the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability would ensure international comparability over time. Disability-responsive budgeting was key for the implementation of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. A failure to adopt that approach would result in leaving persons with disabilities behind.

24. *The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.*

(b) Round table discussions:

(i) National fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation for strengthening the implementation of the Convention

25. *Mr. Rohland (Germany), President, and Mr. Macanawai (civil society) presided as Co-Chairs.*

26. **Mr. Macanawai** (civil society), Co-Chair, said that the discussion would focus on the implementation of the human rights of persons with disabilities through inclusive development, exploring the national fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation to strengthen the Convention. Key areas included the implementation of the Convention at the national level, and persons with disabilities living in poverty in least developed and developing countries. The implementation of the Convention with a limited budget posed a real challenge.

27. **Ms. Cisternas Reyes** (Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility), panellist, said that, while national fiscal space remained an ambiguous concept, the International Monetary Fund had defined it as the ability of a Government to raise spending or lower taxes without endangering market access and debt sustainability.

28. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development provided a global framework for financing development, including a series of items closely linked to persons with disabilities, such as measures on social protection, accessible infrastructure and decent work. Such obligations fell primarily to government authorities, but other actors had a role to play, including micro, small, medium and large enterprises. Furthermore, as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda needed to be supported by relevant data and statistics, developing countries would need billions of dollars to compile their requisite annual statistics or censuses. Multilateral cooperation would be crucial in that regard.

29. The high-level political forum on sustainable development had highlighted the need for leadership on development from private enterprises. However, the latter must be persuaded to engage in development partnerships that, above all, shared risks and rewards fairly; avoided actions that ran counter to development, providing compensation where necessary; promoted the employment of persons with disabilities; respected the concept of corporate responsibility; and invested in sustainable development, particularly for persons with disabilities. Arguments must also be found to convince enterprises to follow the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. By showing their commitment to sustainable development and persons with disabilities, for instance by contributing to public policies on employment and accessibility, private enterprises would receive a return on their investment through the enhancement of their corporate image.

30. **Ms. Kitamura** (National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, Japan), panellist, said that all cooperation sectors had different strengths, limitations, opportunities and constraints, and knowledge-sharing could accelerate the process of achieving equality for persons with disabilities. Collection of data by private and international organizations could be used as the foundation for creating new governmental statistics. By using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability, it would be possible to make international comparisons and address a wide range of targets. The Washington Group helped to adapt indicators to the situation of each country and provided training on designing statistics.

31. After the great east Japan earthquake in 2011, the national public broadcaster had collected data showing that the mortality rate of persons with disabilities was double the general mortality rate in the affected area, which demonstrated the need to support the evacuation of such persons in the event of large-scale disasters. That case offered a good example of cooperation between the public and private sectors, with data collection by the broadcasting company, response by local governments, publication of results by organizations of persons with disabilities and completion of the data collection by the Government. Discussion on which governmental statistics should be disaggregated depending on disability was necessary, and information collection could be integrated if common data collection tools were agreed upon between sectors.

32. The World Health Organization estimated that about 15 per cent of the world's population lived with some form of disability, but few countries could provide welfare services for all those citizens using public funds. Private organizations were therefore taking a leading role to address the gap, including through international cooperation. For example, organizations of persons with disabilities had opened a support centre for such persons after the great east Japan earthquake, funded by donations from private organizations and individuals, with 10 per cent of the funds coming from overseas. Her organization was currently investigating the possibility of transferring some of those pioneering practices to the provision of government services in the event of future disasters.

33. *A short video was shown on the work undertaken by the Dominican Republic to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.*

34. **Mr. Corporán** (National Council on Disability, Dominican Republic), panellist, said that the Convention had been ratified in all but two countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, and that full ratification would strengthen cooperation partnerships with the private sector. Ensuring the sustainability of social progress was a significant challenge, and the Convention acted as a guiding light towards true social change, which all actions, plans and measures taken should reflect. It was strange that the business world had not yet picked up on the figures provided by the World Bank which depicted persons with disabilities and their families as consumers. Similarly, the political class was often wary of engaging with the issue of disability, considering such action an expense rather than an investment. Increased international cooperation and funding in key sectors would therefore have a beneficial impact on persons with disabilities, enabling them to fully enjoy all their rights. South-South cooperation was also highly important for the Dominican Republic, which was collaborating with several countries in the region and working to incorporate disability into the Central American Integration System.

35. **Mr. Cuk** (Global Action on Disability Network), panellist, said that, in order to leave no one behind and truly implement the Convention, more sustainable funding was needed from Member States and other stakeholders in disability-inclusive development. New stakeholders must also be motivated to start making commitments and contributions. It was necessary to work together to share expertise, coordinate actions and generally raise the profile of disability across a broad range of organizations contributing to disability-inclusive development. The implementation budgets for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), for example, were disproportionately higher than the corresponding budget for the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Similarly, there was stronger financial support for non-governmental organizations promoting the rights of women and children than for those that promoted the rights of persons with disabilities. While those Member States, foundations and international non-governmental organizations that were successfully investing in the rights of persons with disabilities should be duly recognized, the insufficient financial and operational commitments that had been made since the implementation of the Convention remained a cause for concern.

36. His organization worked to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities among its members and had therefore fully aligned its actions with article 32 of the Convention. It had also attracted organizations that made both financial and general investments in disability-inclusive development, including new donors seeking to learn more about disability-inclusive development as well as development banks such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Members collaborated in thematic working groups to make progress in such areas as inclusive education, social protection and humanitarian action. They had already achieved some success in jointly advocating for the adoption of an inclusion marker by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Members had also been actively promoting data disaggregation and the establishment of a system-wide action plan, accountability framework and unit to address the inclusion of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system, among other efforts.

37. **Ms. Srour** (General Palestinian Union of Persons with Disability), panellist, said that many persons with disabilities all over the world were suffering from isolation, marginalization and exclusion and many countries had unmonitored institutions for persons with disabilities where violence and violations of human rights took place. It was important for the gravity of those issue to be reflected in strategies, policies and budget-planning and it was the responsibility of all to find ways to enable persons with disabilities to fully participate as strong, effective contributors in development processes. The discrepancy in the budget for the implementation of the Convention and the place of persons with disabilities within the United Nations system should both be addressed. One solution might be to establish United Nations offices worldwide to appropriate budgets, conduct consultations and promote the universal implementation of the Convention.

38. In the context of international cooperation, it was important to separate politics from human rights and to remember that persons with disabilities were the real experts. International cooperation was sometimes politicized and used to manipulate international law and national legislation. Instead, it should be an arena for advocacy, and for ending occupation and armed conflict.

39. Articles in laws relating to persons with disabilities and other relevant national laws should encourage financial contributions to the implementation of the Convention from the private sector. In addition, private sector products and environments should be made accessible by law. As disability issues were cross sectoral, all public, private and non-profit organizations were

responsible for the implementation of the Convention and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. State party representatives, international agencies and persons with disabilities, despite their differences, must find better ways of working together, fostering inclusion and preventing exclusion.

40. **Ms. Mercado** (Denmark) said that the principle of treating everyone with respect and dignity was reflected in the political system, civil society organizations, companies and the welfare system in Denmark. Danish social legislation aimed to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and to improve their overall quality of life. Social services worked to improve the potential for development of every individual through personal care, practical assistance, technical aid and financial support. However, it was still necessary to create the best possible framework to help more persons with disabilities gain employment, and to provide municipalities with the tools needed to ensure that the system catered to everyone. Inspiration and guidance should be taken from non-governmental organizations in the field of disability and from international partners and colleagues.

41. **Ms. Manombe-Ncube** (Namibia) said that political participation was an inherent human right, and persons with disabilities could experience citizenship in its fullest sense through involvement in public affairs. Namibia had therefore developed voter education programmes and an electoral system for persons with disabilities. In the Namibian Parliament there was one other woman with disabilities and two with albinism, which should be recognized as a disability due to the stigmatization and discrimination experienced by persons with albinism.

42. **Mr. Fembek** (Observer for the Essl Foundation) said that his organization was currently focusing its activities on the Zero Project, which was dedicated to exploring and communicating innovations, practices and policies that supported the implementation of the Convention. Over the previous six years, 400 innovations had been selected from all over the world, most of which had been presented at the annual Zero Project Conference in Vienna. The cross-sectoral, global approach adopted had led to three main findings on how the creation of public-private partnerships and international cooperation could be facilitated. Firstly, credible, evidence-based innovations and case studies were one of the strongest drivers towards the implementation of the Convention. Secondly, cross-sectoral inclusive cooperation was necessary to bridge gaps across borders and sectors and create dialogue among all stakeholders, within a clearly defined framework that excluded any unachievable goals. Thirdly, more effective communication was needed with stakeholders supporting the implementation of the Convention.

43. **Ms. Skaug** (Norway) said that disability inclusion was a high priority for Norwegian human rights policy, and it was important to support efforts to develop indicators and statistical methodologies to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Better knowledge of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities would enable improved policies and targeted actions. Inclusive education was a particular priority. Norway had led the development of the Global Digital Library project, which made quality-assured learning resources available in several African and Asian languages, and planned to place considerable emphasis on using universally accessible formats to benefit users with disabilities. Improvement was still needed in the documentation of good practices involving international cooperation, partly due to the lack of reliable data on disability and the lack of tools and systems for effective, systematic results management. Norway had supported the efforts of the United Kingdom to strengthen the use of statistics, and had actively contributed to work on introducing a policy marker on disability in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development system. Norway had also encouraged the inclusion of a definition of disability when using the Development Assistance Committee disability policy marker, which, if used systematically, could make a significant difference in efforts to achieve disability-inclusive societies. Using measurement tools such as the disability policy marker and the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability could represent a milestone in working towards fulfilment of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. The lack of data for planning and monitoring inclusion reliably was a key challenge, particularly as it had not been possible to make global or regional comparisons.

44. **Mr. Samaniego** (Paraguay) said that the National Disability Council in Paraguay had created a space not only for decision-making by persons with disabilities but also for collaborative work between civil society organizations and the State, leading to the establishment of a national plan for the rights of persons with disabilities. The empowerment of persons with disabilities was not only important in terms of participation, but also in decision-making, in keeping with the concept of "nothing about us without us". In Paraguay, labour laws on inclusion stipulated that at least 5per cent of staff in the civil service must be persons with disabilities. Progress was also being made on labour inclusion in the private sector, the aim being to demonstrate ability before disability. Paraguay was the first country with historic Jesuit ruins that had put in

place ramps to facilitate access for persons with disabilities.

45. **Mr. Hossain** (Observer for ADD International) said that his organization was working to implement the Convention and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in order to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. To that end, it worked with microfinance institutions to enable persons with disabilities to access credit to set up businesses and used bilateral arrangements to allocate resources for international cooperation. Given the challenges associated with securing sufficient resources, the focus should be on domestic financing, increasing overseas development assistance and welcoming new partners from the private sector. The political commitment of Governments to mobilize resources was also highly important.

46. **Ms. Al Fahim** (United Arab Emirates) said that financing was the key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and reaching those at risk of being left behind, including persons with disabilities. In her country, mainstreaming had become the single most important policy decision on financing. A national committee had been set up to move forward with an innovative action plan to translate the Goals into reality, requiring all government entities to be fully capable of serving persons with disabilities, to submit progress reports and to include such persons in policy consultations. Mainstreaming had increased private sector engagement, with governmental regulations creating a market that encouraged companies not only to participate, but also to compete and innovate. A system-wide United Nations marker for persons with disabilities would be revolutionary in terms of mainstreaming and financing. Such an approach would require the United Nations and its partners to disclose their budgets and what they were delivering for persons with disabilities, and to engage with such persons in the design, execution and monitoring of programmes. The marker would also drive data disaggregation, which was a critical tool. Mainstreaming was indispensable in changing the approach to financing, and the United Nations could lead the way.

47. **Mr. Sushkevych** (Ukraine) said that the Russian translation of "persons with disabilities" in official United Nations documents still used the offensive word "invalids". That discriminatory term had however been removed from all Ukrainian legislation and the same approach should be taken throughout the United Nations system.

48. As a result of the ongoing war in his country billions of dollars had been wasted on resisting foreign aggression and tens of thousands of persons with disabilities had been deprived of their most basic rights. The United Nations should step up its efforts to combat aggression and thereby protect the human rights of persons with disabilities.

49. **Mr. Loufty** (Observer for Disability Peoples' International) said that States must include persons with disabilities in their budgets, otherwise they would not achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It was the responsibility of the international corporate community to abide by the principles of the Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Persons with disabilities should be perceived as key agents in the process of economic and social development. There was a crucial need to make sure that all products, public spending and investments were inclusive for persons with disabilities. Accessibility was a crucial principle of the Convention and all Member States must abide by their commitment to it.

50. **Mr. Cuk** (Global Action on Disability Network) said that financing for development, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the Convention must all be taken seriously. It was time to move forward and words must now be translated into action.

51. **Mr. Corporán** (National Council on Disability, Dominican Republic) said that aligning the Convention with the Goals and national planning systems would help to mainstream disability issues and promote investment. The Dominican Republic was already taking such an approach and had successfully created an inter-agency project involving governmental organizations and civil society. The project promoted the rights of persons with disabilities through inclusive education, independent living and decent work, and involved the participation of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services and UNICEF.

52. **Ms. Kitamura** (National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, Japan), making reference to the strong welfare systems and high tax rates in Denmark and Norway, said that Japan was considering how taxes could be used to increase the budget for persons with disabilities. The Norwegian Global Digital Library project was very valuable, but there was a potential issue regarding copyright limits on the exchange of digital books. Cooperation from publishers was needed to produce lower cost digital versions of paper books, which would benefit persons with visual impairments.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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New York, 12–14 June 2018

Summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 13 June 2018, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Perera (Vice-President) ..... (Sri Lanka)

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In the absence of Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria), Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 5: Matters related to the implementation of the Convention (*continued*)

(a) General debate (*continued*)

1. **Ms. Adamson** (European Union) said that all States members of the European Union were parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, following the ratification of the Convention by Ireland in 2018. In November 2017, the European Union and all its member States had adopted and proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights, which included a specific principle on the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their enjoyment of rights to income support, to services enabling their participation in the labour market and to adapted work environments. Disability was also mainstreamed in rights related to employment, education, equal opportunities, child care and child support, long-term care, housing and access to essential services.

2. By the end of 2018, the European Commission planned to reach agreement on a European Accessibility Act, which could potentially improve the access of persons with disabilities to products and services, in line with article 9 of the Convention. Significant efforts had also been invested in the dialogue with civil society and in awareness-raising activities, not least through the annual European Access City Award. Discussions were also under way to create a mechanism that would succeed the European Disability Strategy, which was due to expire in 2020.

3. The European Union provided professional training on the implementation of the Convention, including for persons with disabilities, their organizations and staff in European Union delegations. The European Union was committed to continuing to improve the situation of persons with disabilities and engaging with partners externally to promote the ratification and effective implementation and monitoring of the Convention worldwide.

4. **Ms. Elmansouri** (Tunisia) said that while it had been 10 years since the adoption of the Convention, persons with disabilities across the globe still suffered from discrimination and marginalization, especially women and girls with disabilities. Their situation was further complicated in times of conflict or humanitarian emergencies. If countries failed to implement the Convention, they would struggle to meet their obligations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Tunisia was working steadfastly to achieve the full inclusion of persons with disabilities and ensure that they were actively involved in all phases of the adoption and implementation of laws, strategies and programmes related to their rights. Law No. 83 adopted in August 2005 comprehensively addressed the protection, care and integration of persons with disabilities and served as the guiding framework in the development of relevant policies, plans, programmes and mechanisms. Tunisia had also carried out reforms to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoyed their fundamental rights enshrined in the Convention, including through national plans on disability prevention, accessibility and schooling and a programme on the employment of persons with disabilities. A system of quotas had also been established to guarantee the direct and equitable participation of persons with disabilities in the first free municipal elections held in Tunisia recently.

6. **Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro** (Nicaragua) said that under the Administration of President Ortega, Nicaragua had focused on the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly in the areas of equality, awareness, health and rehabilitation, education, employment and the improvement of infrastructure for accessible transport and public, private and community spaces. A major achievement had been the development of the "Voices for All" programme, under which persons with disabilities received an official card granting them access to priority care in public and private systems and half price tickets on transportation. The programme had been made possible through the support of Cuba and had provided for comprehensive care for nearly 300,000 persons with disabilities.

7. Under Nicaraguan law, persons with disabilities were entitled to claim allowances and housing and employment benefits, and to gain other advantages from government programmes. National disability day had been established on 25 August to raise awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities. Nicaragua also had a Special Ombudsman who was responsible for monitoring compliance with the Persons with Disabilities Act in public and private institutions.

8. **Ms. Maciejewska** (Poland) said that the objectives of the Polish disability policy had remained the same for 25 years: decent living conditions and equality in treatment, activities and accessibility. Increased spending on persons with disabilities over the past two years had resulted in the introduction of new solutions to improve the family life, professional activity, mobility and access to information of persons

with disabilities. Allocations to persons with disabilities and their caregivers had increased, especially in the past year. Development programmes in sheltered housing and support centre networks were favoured over institutionalized care. The "For Life" programme, adopted in 2016, contained a range of measures to assist persons with disabilities, including increased health-care coordination for women with complications in pregnancy and children with disabilities, a broader scope for family assistance, the establishment of local centres to support children with disabilities and assistance to family members wishing to return to work. The Accessibility Plus programme included various initiatives to improve access to public spaces, transportation, products and services.

9. A strategy for persons with disabilities was due for adoption in 2018 and would provide details on new policy guidelines, a detailed plan of action and a monitoring system. A new universal system for assessing disability and dependency levels was under development, with the aim of ensuring more individualized support. Further thought would also be given to the current use of shift work for caregivers and the development of a new rehabilitation model.

10. **Ms. Marchante** (Andorra) said that her Government had made various changes since the submission of its report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017. In December of that year, the Government, assisted by organizations representing persons with disabilities, had approved a law containing urgent measures to harmonize national laws with the provisions of the Convention. Given that realization of the rights of persons with disabilities would involve all sectors of society, the Government had publicized texts on the rights enshrined the Convention in accessible formats and was providing mandatory training on the Convention to all staff of all public bodies.

11. The Network of Inclusive Companies was an initiative that encouraged private companies in Andorra to promote the rights and the independence of persons with disabilities. To date, 13 of the 99 companies contacted had joined the Network.

12. Since 2002, the Integra and Integra Plus programmes had helped children and young people with disabilities to enjoy the same conditions and extracurricular and leisure activities as others. A similar programme had recently been created for adults.

13. Andorra had an inclusive education system and had established numerous initiatives to guarantee full respect for the rights of persons with disabilities to education. Recent civil protection plans had specifically included the needs of persons with disabilities. The Government was currently working with parliament on a draft law on equality and non-discrimination to protect particularly vulnerable groups, not least persons with disabilities. It also planned to amend the election and referendum laws to guarantee persons with disabilities the same conditions for voting as others.

14. **Ms. Warwick** (Observer for the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People) said that there were 466 million hard-of-hearing people worldwide, including 34 million children. Some families with children who were hard of hearing prevented them from attending school to avoid social stigmatization, while some adults often did not disclose hearing loss for fear of losing their jobs. Unfortunately, many children who would benefit from cochlear implants did not receive them or received them only in one ear. Similarly, hearing aids, assistant hearing devices and amplification systems such as hearing loops were not nearly as available as they should be. The limited understanding of the needs of hard-of-hearing persons meant that captioning was sometimes not available for television content, Internet media and in meeting room situations. She welcomed initiatives by Sweden and the Netherlands to offer hard-of-hearing people captioning for their communication needs, as well as legislation introduced in Finland, Japan and the United States that required the captioning of certain television programmes.

15. **Ms. Gimolieca** (Angola) said that her Government had adopted a legal framework to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all areas of society. The Angolan Constitution stipulated that citizens with disabilities should enjoy full rights and be subject to the same duties, without prejudice or restrictions, and that the State must adopt national policies relating to the treatment, rehabilitation and integration of citizens with disabilities, the provision of support to their families, the elimination of obstacles to their mobility and the development of principles to raise citizens' awareness of their duties to include and respect persons with disabilities. The State also worked with civil society to promote and support special education, technical and vocational training, physical and social rehabilitation and the inclusion of citizens with disabilities. As vocational training and rehabilitation could boost the employment rate of persons with disabilities, which was crucial to improving the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, Angola had offered training courses to some 1,740 such persons between 2010 and 2017.

16. **Mr. Jo** Nam-kwon (Republic of Korea) said that the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games had been held in Pyeong Chang in the Republic of Korea. Building on the

experience of those Games, the Korean Government intended to continue the Paralympian spirit by establishing a united community in which disabilities were not obstacles.

17. Every five years since 1998, the Government had drawn up a comprehensive plan for persons with disabilities to cover a range of aspects of the lives of persons with disabilities. During the period of the most recent plan, it had increased the budget allocated to persons with disabilities and had enacted a number of important laws, such as the Law on the Protection of Rights and Support for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. In line with the Government's philosophy of creating an inclusive welfare State for all, it had launched its fifth comprehensive plan, which covered the period 2018–2022.

18 The Government was striving to carry out the 2030 Agenda and the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific through international cooperation on disability issues. It currently provided advice, particularly to countries in the Asia-Pacific region, on the collection of disability data. The Government would do its utmost to work with stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels to implement the Convention and build a society that left no one behind.

19. **Ms. Aalders** (Netherlands) said that her Government, having ratified the Convention in June 2016, had drawn up an implementation plan in 2017 and would submit its first report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in mid-2018. The Government would soon launch a national action plan to decrease the number of barriers faced by persons with disabilities in housing, sport, education, political participation, care and transport.

20. Her Government had already done a lot to improve the participation of the 2 million Dutch citizens who were blind, deaf or suffered from physical or mental disabilities or psychiatric disorders, particularly through cooperation with experts, municipalities, companies and sector-specific organizations. In the coming months, it would focus on developing, steering and monitoring a new set of indicators. It was also working closely with tens of thousands of employers' organizations and small and medium-sized enterprises in the retail and hospitality industries to help them ensure that their businesses and websites were accessible to persons with disabilities. The Government was directly supporting a group of 25 municipalities that were taking the lead in implementing the Convention at the local level.

21. **Mr. Makava** (Cambodia) said that the Convention should be implemented through a strong cooperative partnership between civil society and the private sector. The Government had increased employment opportunities for persons with disabilities working as civil servants and had mainstreamed the issue of women with disabilities in government policies and plans. A quota system had established that 1 per cent of all employees of businesses in Cambodia with more than 100 staff members must be persons with disabilities. Women with disabilities worked a reduced day of seven hours, enjoyed free health care and were entitled to equal pay to men. Each year, the Government invited 3,000 persons with disabilities to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Persons with disabilities could vote and stand as candidates in national elections.

22. Cambodia attached considerable importance to the Convention and was currently preparing its National Disability Strategy Plan 2019–2023, which would focus on reducing poverty among persons with disabilities through work and employment schemes. Persons with disabilities were provided with social protection under the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025. Cambodia had made significant progress in building an inclusive society and enhancing the well-being of persons with disabilities in line with its ongoing efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. In the future, it would work with the general community to promote even more inclusive practices in education, employment and society.

23. **Mr. Ja** Song Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the human rights of all citizens of his country, including persons with disabilities, were protected under the national Constitution and relevant laws. Children with disabilities were required to attend secondary school education in the universal 12-year compulsory education system and the conditions for their study, life and medical treatment were covered while they were at school. Deaf and blind students received scholarship assistance. All persons with disabilities were entitled to free health care and orthopaedic apparatus, including prosthetic arms and legs. They enjoyed full civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights without any discrimination.

24. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had adopted the Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in June 2003. It had subsequently signed the Convention in July 2013 and had ratified it in November 2016. A working group had begun drafting the initial report on the implementation of the Convention, which was due for submission in 2019. In April 2018, the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea had decided that national efforts should be refocused on socialist economic improvements. The country was also

implementing a 2016–2020 strategy on national economic development that would enhance the implementation of the Convention. Given the importance of international cooperation in the implementation of the Convention, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had invited the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities to visit the country in May 2017 with a view to intensifying cooperation in that respect.

25. **Ms. Hervas** (Observer for the Agrenska Foundation), speaking also on behalf of the NGO Committee for Rare Diseases, said that individuals affected by rare diseases were frequently marginalized or invisible because they accounted for fewer than 1 in 2,000 people. However, rare diseases were often chronic, highly complex, progressive and severely disabling; they also decreased life expectancy and gave rise to specific care needs. A European-wide survey on the impact of rare diseases carried out by the Rare Barometer Programme in 2017 indicated that the overwhelming majority of the 300 million people worldwide living with rare diseases also had disabilities. Over 70 per cent of respondents stated that they had difficulties with motor or sensorial functions, more than 75 per cent faced limitations in activities of daily living, while many also struggled to receive recognition and compensation for their disability because they appeared healthy.

26. People living with rare diseases faced challenges in accessing health care and rehabilitation that should be addressed in line with articles 25 and 26 of the Convention. If the international community truly wished to maintain a human-rights based approach and followed the principle of leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Convention and the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals, more attention must be paid to diverse rare diseases.

27. **Ms. Azlisha** (Malaysia) said that her Government considered the Convention to be an important instrument for improving gender equality and upholding the rights of persons with disabilities, especially in the context of Member States' commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Following the general elections in May 2018, the Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development had taken over responsibility for disability issues and her Government had launched various programmes and activities to enhance the quality of life of persons with disabilities. A management and information system for the advocacy and online registration of persons with disabilities had greatly improved the quality and targeting of services. The 469,377 individuals registered so far had benefited from more than 25 services offered by the Government and private sector. Under the Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016–2020, the Government had continued its commitment to an inclusive development agenda, while reaffirming its belief that growth could not be measured by economic success alone. The Plan provided for the establishment of seven independent living centres across the country designed to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. It had also resulted in the launching of a Business Encouragement Assistance Scheme that offered financial assistance to entrepreneurs with disabilities.

28. **Ms. Larsson** (Sweden) said that she welcomed the active involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations at the current meeting. Since the ratification of the Convention by Sweden in 2008, her country had made significant progress in enhancing the rights of women, men, boys and girls with disabilities. The Swedish parliament had agreed on a bill to modify the objective of the national disability policy in line with the Convention. The new objective was to increase equality in living conditions and achieve the full participation of persons with disabilities by focusing on universal design principles, existing gaps in accessibility for persons with disabilities, individual support for empowerment and the prevention of discrimination. Measures contained under the policy were in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and reflected previous recommendations by the Committee. Her Government was fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, both internationally and nationally, and aimed to transfer the Goals and targets to the Swedish context in order to leave no one behind. The country's feminist Government welcomed the clear references in the 2030 Agenda to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

29. **Ms. Betham-Malielegaoi** (Samoa) said that her Government was committed to implementing, monitoring and reporting on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Incheon Strategy, the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related instruments. Translating the provisions under those instruments into national actions and priorities should ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities would be met more swiftly.

30. Her Government had mainstreamed the disability agenda into its national strategy and had made the inclusion of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities one of its national priorities. It had also incorporated the Washington Group Short Set of

Questions on Disability into the 2016 national census, with the aim of producing disaggregated data on persons with disabilities.

31. In December 2016, the Government had reviewed the compliance of its legislation with the Convention and had costed its plan for implementing the Convention. In the review, it had taken note of the discrimination faced by women with disabilities and the need to provide further protections not covered in existing legislation, including the prohibition of forced sterilization. The Samoan disability advocacy organization Nuanua o le Alofa had spearheaded efforts to raise community awareness of the Convention in Samoa and had advocated equal opportunities and the mainstreaming of the disability agenda in national laws, policies and programmes. The Samoan National Disaster Risk Management Plan 2016–2019 outlined further actions to strengthen the disability policy. The Government had also made the national construction code more inclusive and had introduced more services into the health sector for persons with mobility needs.

32. **Mr. Poudyal** (Nepal) said that the Convention was a milestone in the global community's efforts to define the rights of person with disabilities more clearly and had already brought about positive changes in attitudes and approaches. Nepal had ratified the Convention in 2009 and had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/NPL/1) in 2014. His Government had adopted a number of measures to ensure the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities, including the right to free education in Braille and sign languages; the prohibition of discrimination against persons with disabilities; the right to participate in State bodies on the basis of inclusive principles; and the right to social security. Under the Constitution, all political parties must include persons with disabilities among their roster of candidates for election to the Federal Parliament. In 2017, Nepal had replaced its previous Disability Rights Act and had redefined disability in line with the human rights model enshrined in the Convention. The new Act recognized the diverse forms of disability, included provisions on the elimination of the use of derogatory words and criminalized discrimination against persons with disabilities.

33. Nepal faced challenges in enforcing legal provisions related to persons with disabilities and also lacked facilities for such persons and adequate programmes to promote their employment or self-employment. As a least developed and landlocked country vulnerable to multiple disasters, Nepal needed more international support and technical assistance to meet its international obligations. International cooperation was equally important for forging collaboration with the civil society.

34. **Mr. Tan** (Singapore) said that his Government had invested in building a fair, inclusive and caring society in which persons with disabilities were recognized, empowered and granted every opportunity to achieve their potential and participate as full and contributing members of society. Every five years since 2007, the Government had issued a national road map containing the country's disability policies and its implementation plan for the Convention. The first two road maps had strengthened support for persons with disabilities in the areas of early intervention, education, employment, mobility and accessibility, health care and the use of assistive technology. The third road map, which was currently under way, had been developed jointly by the public, private and people sectors and included some $400 million in annual investments in new initiatives.

35. A bill on vulnerable adults had been adopted to allow the Government to act more swiftly to protect adults suffering from, or at risk of, abuse and neglect, in cases where family and community interventions were inadequate. The Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children supported children with moderate to severe developmental delays. The SG Enable agency had been set up in 2013 to facilitate employment for, and provide job support to, persons with disabilities. For a decade, the Government and SG Enable had piloted a programme of customized support and training for students with complex and diverse disability profiles transitioning from school to working life. Health-care subsidies allowed all Singaporeans, including persons with disabilities, to access the medical services that they needed.

36. **Ms. Ilagan** (Observer for Rehabilitation International) said that over the 10 years since the Convention had come into force, the perception of disability had improved and there was greater recognition of disability issues as the key to leaving no one behind. Nevertheless, the fact that fewer persons with disabilities from the global South were participating in meetings in New York owing to a lack of financial resources was a cause of great concern. States parties should allocate more resources to that end and pay particular attention to assisting persons with disabilities from developing countries. Effective and well-coordinated mechanisms were also important in order to carry out the policy reforms needed to achieve the vision set out in the Convention. States parties ultimately had the power to ensure that active and ongoing engagements for change were backed not only by good intentions but also by financial resources.

37. **Ms. Chacón** (Costa Rica) said that protection of human rights was enshrined in the national Constitution. In October 2018, the country would carry out its first survey on disability, which would incorporate the parameters of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability. The Government had also amended legislation to grant all Costa Ricans both legal capacity and physical access to vote in presidential elections.

38. The Convention would be fully implemented only if persons with disabilities were involved in the drafting, execution and evaluation of laws and policies affecting them. It was also crucial to mainstream their experiences and perspectives in reports on compliance with relevant regulations. Costa Rica was working on strengthening mechanisms to guarantee that persons with disabilities and organizations defending their rights were consulted meaningfully.

39. **Ms. Rivas Asenjo** (Chile) said that although Chile had made major advances in its inclusion of persons with disabilities, considerable work lay ahead. The newly elected Administration sought to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities by, inter alia: enhancing their freedom and independence; taking on the responsibility of eliminating barriers and creating a fully inclusive society; ensuring decent conditions for all; allowing persons with disabilities to become agents of change by involving them in dialogue on their rights and duties; and coordinating intersectoral policies, programmes and actions. Chile was thus empowering its National Disability Service to coordinate the disability policies of all public bodies.

40. Nevertheless, the design and implementation of appropriate public policies for persons with disabilities depended on reliable information. Chile carried out national disability surveys, had held a census in 2016 and maintained a national disability registry. However, the census did not include specific measures on disabilities and the registry was unreliable for formulating disability policies and programmes, since it currently included only 10 per cent of persons with disabilities. Chile was therefore working on a National Assessment and Certification Plan, known as the "Disability Map", to coordinate all public and private entities and organizations of persons with disabilities that were competent to assess disability status. There were also plans to facilitate the certification process and make data collection more efficient, in compliance with article 31 of the Convention.

41. **Ms. Swaffer** (Observer for Dementia Alliance International), noting that many national health-care systems excluded data on citizens over 60 years of age and collected more data on men than on women and girls, said that high-quality and disaggregated disability statistics were crucial. The disaggregation of data by disability, sex and age, especially in lower-middle-income countries and remote communities, was particularly useful in the development of inclusive policies that focused on human rights. Persons with disabilities due to forms of dementia, especially Alzheimer's disease, were often undercounted in national statistics and had more limited access to redress simply because they received diagnoses in later life.

42. In their implementation and monitoring of the Convention, States parties must take into account the 50 million people worldwide living with dementia, most of whom were living in lower- and middle-income countries. Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society and organizations of persons with disabilities should also provide the financial support needed for people living with dementia to attend meetings on matters affecting them.

43. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia) said that the Government had begun bringing national legislation and policies into line with the Convention following its ratification in 2010. In June 2017, it had approved a draft law on the protection of the rights and the promotion of the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, which had subsequently been extensively reviewed by non-governmental organizations, specialists and persons with disabilities during parliamentary hearings. The draft law would be submitted for a second reading once all recommendations from the hearings had been considered.

44. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme, had carried out a project to enhance access to services and the participation of persons with disabilities in line with the principles of the Convention and the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health of the World Health Organization. The aim had been to shift from a medical to a rights-based model of disability assessment in order to improve targeting of support services and create an environment of equal participation. The new model had been successfully tested, with organizations that worked with persons with disabilities invited to participate. For the first time, the model empowered the applicant to directly contribute to the decision-making process through self-assessment. The model had been incorporated into the 2017 government programme for nationwide implementation. The Government had also approved the Comprehensive Plan on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2017–2021. The

Plan was based on the Convention and would serve as the primary social inclusion policy for the next five years.

45. **Ms. Longcroft** (Observer for the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) said that WIPO was working to increase access to knowledge and educational opportunities for the 253 million people worldwide with visual impairments. The Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled, adopted in 2013, provided the legal framework for the production and transfer of accessible books across national boundaries. To date, it had been ratified by 39 States.

46. One initiative to implement the Marrakesh Treaty was the Accessible Books Consortium, which had been launched in 2014. A public-private partnership led by WIPO, the Consortium brought together organizations representing persons who were print disabled, such as the World Blind Union; libraries for the blind; standards bodies; organizations representing authors and publishers; and collective management organizations. Its goal was to increase the number of books available worldwide in accessible formats. Since June 2014, the Consortium had established projects in 12 developing and least developed countries to provide training, technical assistance and funding for the production of accessible educational materials in national languages and had funded the production of over 4,500 educational materials for primary, secondary and university students. The Consortium had also developed an online database of accessible books, known as the ABC Global Book Service, through which participating libraries could request accessible digital books without needing to receive authorization from copyright owners. Over 205,000 library-to-library loans had been made to date, and with the upcoming implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty by the European Union on 11 October 2018, a further 270,000 titles would be added.

47. States should support such initiatives by acceding to the Marrakesh Treaty, providing training and funding for the production of accessible books and facilitating the involvement of their national libraries and organizations in the Global Book Service. The Marrakesh Treaty and the Accessible Books Consortium were strategically aligned with the Convention and the 2030 Agenda, especially Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education.

(b) Round table discussions (*continued*):

(ii) Women and girls with disabilities

48. *Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, and Ms. Agarwal (civil society) presided as Co-Chairs.*

49. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), Co-Chair, said that the theme of women and girls with disabilities was a key element of upholding human rights and ensuring inclusive development for persons with disabilities. Persistent cultural, social, legal, physical and institutional barriers prevented the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all areas of public and private life. They were often denied the right to have a family, and a lack of access to transportation, justice and communications compounded their isolation and exclusion. The round table offered an opportunity to discuss some of the key challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities and to share good practices that advanced their human rights and promoted their full inclusion and participation, thus mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities within sustainable development strategies.

50. Participants should consider the following issues: how to leverage general comment No. 3 (2016) of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Assembly resolution 72/162, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international frameworks to support the implementation of article 6 of the Convention; laws and policies that protected the rights of women and girls with disabilities and practices that reduced inequalities; the role played by local stakeholders in the development of disability-inclusive humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction, and how their expertise could support capacity-building within organizations of women and girls with disabilities in crisis-affected areas; the strategies that should be put in place so that global women's rights movements could mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities and foster their participation; and how Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and other stakeholders could contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda and ensure that no woman or girl was left behind.

51. **Ms. Mohamed** (Mombasa County Assembly, Kenya), panellist, accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that 46 per cent of females with disabilities in Kenya were under 15 years of age. Many hospitals were not accessible to women with disabilities, and a change in mentality was needed, since people were often shocked when a pregnant

woman with a disability arrived at a hospital, yet everyone had the right to love, to get married and to have a baby. Owing to a lack of employment opportunities, many women with disabilities lived in poverty in Kenya and job creation was therefore vital to their empowerment.

52. The Government of Kenya had put in place policies to address the challenges faced by women with disabilities. For example, the National Gender and Equality Commission was enforcing nomination rules regarding affirmative action for women in the Senate, the National Assembly and county assemblies. Even so, only two women had been nominated to county assemblies. Government initiatives to improve the standard of living of persons with disabilities in Kenya included a national development fund, a women's enterprise fund, free primary education and a cash transfer programme for persons with severe disabilities.

53. Three main bodies had responsibilities within the national implementation and monitoring mechanism: the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the National Gender and Equality Commission, and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities. All three were funded by the Government, but clarity was needed on which agency was the focal point for disability matters in the country.

54. **Ms. Juan López** (National Council for the Development and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Mexico), panellist, said that 6 per cent of the population in Mexico lived with some kind of disability, 53 per cent of whom were women. During the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto, progress had been made on developing good practices that reduced inequality, and on laws and policies that upheld the rights of women and girls with disabilities. Mexico had adopted a law for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, a general law on the rights of children and adolescents, and a gender equality law. For the first time, a gender perspective had been mainstreamed in the national development plan for the period 2013–2018. Such mainstreaming was mandatory and had its own budget.

55. The national programme for the development and inclusion of persons with disabilities was evaluated every two years. Between 2014 and 2016, health-care, education and workplace access had all increased for persons with disabilities. A national child and adolescent protection system had been set up, together with child protection offices in each of the federative entities. A total of 38 centres offered legal, medical and psychological support to women, including to women with disabilities. Units in the federative entities provided specialized support to women and girls who had suffered from violence, abuse, abandonment or exploitation. Of the women and girls who had visited such units, 7 per cent had a disability. In conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF, Mexico had developed a programme to care for children with disabilities whose mothers worked. A total of 10,000 establishments had been set up, from which 6,000 children had benefited. Mexico promoted humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction through its national civil protection programme, which contained specific provisions regarding the needs of persons with disabilities during humanitarian emergencies and other high-risk situations. Implementation of the programme was mandatory and priority was given to women with disabilities.

56. To monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that no woman or girl was left behind, Mexico had set up a national council and a national strategy, throughout which a gender perspective had been mainstreamed. Mexico had incorporated the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability into its surveys, and had drawn on beneficiary registers from the health and social development sectors to create a national register of persons with disabilities, which would enable statistical analysis to be performed. Many significant challenges remained before the needs of women with disabilities would be met. In particular, women and girls with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities must have legal capacity and the opportunity to live independently; and programmes on healthy ageing must be developed, given that the number of women with disabilities was rising owing to population ageing.

57. **Ms. Peláez Narváez** (National Organization of the Blind, Spain), panellist, welcomed the recent election to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of six women experts. She was also profoundly grateful, in the name of all women and girls with disabilities, for the opportunity to participate at last in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Women with disabilities wanted to participate in the development of women's policies and in the entities upholding women's rights. They did not want to be left behind. One in five women, or 600 million women worldwide, had a disability, even if they did not have a certificate to prove it.

58. Upholding the rights of women and girls with disabilities was a challenge in three spheres of policymaking. All policies must bear gender in mind, policies for children must consider girls with disabilities, but, most fundamentally, policies for women must take account of women with disabilities. However, that would require the full participation of

women and girls with disabilities through their representative organizations. In many countries, women with disabilities were still unable to participate in the political process. It was impossible to believe that so many women with disabilities did not have their own representative organizations at the national, regional and global levels. They must be able to participate in both women's organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities, but they also had the right to set up their own organizations. She called on the Conference of States Parties and civil society organizations to give women and girls with disabilities the opportunity to be considered as equals and to have their own voices heard.

59. **Ms. Degener** (Chair, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), panellist, said that gender was mainstreamed throughout the Convention and that article 6 thereof was the first binding international human rights provision to address intersectional discrimination. That twin-track approach had been the result of strong lobbying by an international coalition of organizations representing women with disabilities and supportive government delegations to the ad hoc committee that had drafted the Convention. It was one of the many examples of successful cooperation between civil society and Governments during the negotiations.

60. As the former facilitator of article 6 and the current Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, she felt that women and girls with disabilities were the group that had derived the most normative benefit from the adoption of the Convention. However, the value added in terms of international human rights standards had not materialized with respect to implementation policy during the first decade of the Convention. On the contrary, women and girls with disabilities continued to be left behind in almost all areas of implementation. However, there was hope: having been the only female expert on the Committee after the 2016 election, she was delighted by the results of the 2018 election. She was also extremely pleased that Ms. Ana Peláez Narváez was the first woman with a disability to have been elected as an expert to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

61. In terms of action that could be taken to prevent women with disabilities from being left behind, general comment No.3 (2016) of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could be leveraged to support the implementation of the Convention. It identified three priority areas: combating violence; upholding reproductive autonomy and sexual health rights; and eradicating multiple discrimination. Existing national legislation in those areas must be reviewed and amended if needed, or new laws must be enacted. In addition, affirmative action for the development, advancement and empowerment of all women and girls with disabilities needed to be taken, particularly with respect to access to justice, protecting the right to legal capacity and developing gender-sensitive decision-making measures. Furthermore, action was needed to eliminate violence and abuse and to uphold the right to privacy and sexual and reproductive autonomy. It was also important to collect and analyse appropriate data in that regard. Women and girls with disabilities must be recognized and supported in the areas of political participation and national fiscal space, public-private partnerships and international cooperation. Regarding political participation, the Committee had just adopted communication No. 19/2014, which concerned the right of a woman with a disability to take part in elections on an equal basis with others, as enshrined in article 29 of the Convention. She asked those present to look at that new jurisprudence.

62. **Ms. Umoh** (Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, Nigeria), panellist, said that it was well established that women with disabilities experienced multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and the Conference participants had gathered together with the aim of changing that ugly narrative. Among other topics, the panellists had been asked to consider strategies that should be developed in order for global women's rights movements and agendas to mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities and to foster their participation. However, before such strategies could be designed, it was vital to understand why women and girls with disabilities were not being included in the women's movement.

63. In 2013, she had presented her candidature for a leadership role in a mainstream women's movement in Nigeria, in which not many women with disabilities participated. She had met with considerable resistance, but had won because she had known how to act effectively in that particular environment. Capacity must be built within organizations representing women and girls with disabilities, while understanding that it was a different environment to the disability movement or the women's movement. A network of women and girls with disabilities should be funded and supported, to ensure they understood what it meant to work in the mainstream women's movement. In addition, it was important to increase collaboration and communication between women's rights movements and disability rights, to strengthen partnerships and increase diversity. Most importantly, a safe space was needed for the effective participation of women and girls with

disabilities. Without the courage, strength and knowledge needed to navigate the mainstream women's movement, women with disabilities may end up excluded. The women's movement had yet to understand the issues of women with disabilities, and its approach could be very patronizing. Donor agencies and funds should also be consulted about the possibility of inserting a clause in the funding criteria that would enable women and girls with disabilities to participate effectively.

64. The recent election of a woman with a disability to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the first time and the election of six women to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities demonstrated heightened international commitment and greater prioritization of women and girls with disabilities, but those elections were merely the first step. Thanks to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the commitment to leave no one behind, a more realistic approach to the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities was being taken. The international community had recognized that reducing the inequality experienced by women and girls with disabilities was a priority and that the issue should be mainstreamed throughout sustainable development strategies. The 2030 Agenda had also raised awareness about the lack of data on persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls. There was a collective responsibility to gather more data and increase their visibility.

65. **Ms. Lee** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), panellist, said that the international community needed to recognize that it was failing women and girls with disabilities. Laws, policies and practices continued to expound singular approaches and frameworks that dismissed multiple and intersecting facets of their identities. As a result, women and girls with disabilities missed out on the positive measures available to women and girls generally, which widened the gap and entrenched their exclusion.

66. A lack of access to justice reinforced the exclusion of women and girls with disabilities across all sectors. It was clear from a recent OHCHR study that the justice system often failed persons with disabilities, including women, because it did not always remedy inequality and may even ingrain it. For instance, complaints may not be accepted from women or girls with disabilities who were deprived of their legal capacity. Similarly, their complaints or testimony may be dismissed or discounted because such persons were not considered to be credible or competent witnesses. Many women and girls with disabilities were therefore discouraged from seeking help, leaving rights violations unexposed and unremedied. Action must therefore be taken in close consultation with a range of women and girls with disabilities and their representative organizations to repeal discriminatory practices and uphold the equal legal standing and the participation of women and girls with disabilities in investigations and judicial proceedings. Furthermore, there must be a possibility to invoke multiple and intersecting grounds of discrimination, which should proportionately determine liability, sanctions and redress.

67. Within the sphere of access to justice and beyond, data collection and consultation played a critical role in ensuring an intersectional approach, recognizing and capturing the uniqueness of one's experiences of discrimination, and ensuring that they were addressed and redressed. In the case of involuntary treatment and detention, intersecting forms of discrimination had resulted in some of the most serious human rights violations, which had disproportionately affected women with disabilities.

68. There was growing evidence of higher rates of guardianship and forced treatment of women with psychosocial disabilities and women with intellectual disabilities, which was a cause for considerable alarm. In May, the Human Rights Council had held a consultation on promoting human rights in mental health. Human rights experts, practitioners in mental health services and persons with psychosocial disabilities had made it clear that such practices and the legal frameworks that enabled them should no longer exist. Participants had also expressed their opposition to the drafting by the Council of Europe of an Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders, which was not compliant with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. States parties should not be promoting the adoption of new instruments or legislation that undermined their obligations under the Convention. OHCHR called on States parties to the Convention to fulfil their obligations and to engage in meaningful consultation with the rights holders concerned. Good practices on eliminating coercion and ensuring support to live independently and to be included in the community were emerging all over the world, including in Europe, thanks to the momentum created by the Convention. Retrogressive initiatives put a brake on innovation and good practices and ran counter to the wider human rights and development agenda.

69. It was important to recognize and eliminate the risks that continued to subjugate women and girls with disabilities, and to work together to raise their voices

and be led by them in transforming communities into inclusive ones. OHCHR stood ready to support States parties in those efforts.

70. **Ms. Diaz Aguirre** (Panama) said that her Government had taken numerous steps to ensure that women were able to enjoy all human rights in full, including the provision of free legal services to women who had been victims of violence and the establishment of a network to monitor the fulfilment of the equal opportunities plan and the related laws. The "Fami-Empresas" project provided access to capital for indigenous women and women living in rural areas so that they could set up sustainable microenterprises and become economically independent. The Electoral Code had recently been amended to modernize and democratize the electoral system and ensure that women were able to participate in elections on an equal basis. Under Act No. 56 of 2017, at least 30 per cent of all posts in central Government, decentralized institutions and State-owned enterprises must be filled by women. Furthermore, women accounted for 61 per cent of the members of the Governing Board of the National Disability Secretariat. They were responsible for ensuring equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and their families, so that decision-making supported gender equality and women's empowerment.

71. In compliance with the provisions of the Convention on collecting data for the formulation and implementation of disability policies, her Government had set up a platform to operationalize the national system for statistics on persons with disabilities. The platform, which would centralize all information from institutions running programmes for persons with disabilities and their families, represented a significant step forward in meeting their needs.

72. **Ms. Duncan** (Canada) said that her Government was deeply committed to the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion and protection of their human rights. She welcomed the election of more women to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

73. Canada recognized the compounding nature of the discrimination and barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities and was increasingly using an intersectional approach in its policy and programme development. Its Gender-based Analysis Plus tool recognized that experiences were shaped by identity factors such as gender. Having collected valuable data on women with disabilities and on gender equality, her Government had recently set up a new centre for gender, diversity and inclusion statistics.

74. In 2017 her Government had adopted a feminist international assistance policy, which would focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized, including women and girls with disabilities. At the Group of Seven summit only a few days prior, Canada, together with a number of other countries, the European Union and the World Bank, had announced an unprecedented investment of almost $3.8 billion Canadian dollars to support quality education for women and girls living in crisis, conflict-affected and fragile States. When women and girls were given equal opportunities to succeed they could be powerful agents of change, drive stronger economic growth, encourage greater peace and cooperation, and improve quality of life for their families and their communities.

75. **Ms. Dhadda** (Observer for Jaipur Foot) said that her perspective on life had been changed in December 2017, when she had met a 10-year-old girl, Geeta, who had come to Jaipur Foot to be fitted for a prosthetic leg. Geeta was only one of the 1.7 million people who had received a prosthetic from Jaipur Foot, regardless of caste, creed or colour and completely free of charge. She had lost her leg after being run over by a tractor and did not go to school because her family could not afford it and because other children made fun of her disability. Her new prosthetic, together with some fundraising, had opened the door to education and participation in society. It was hard for girls to ensure their voices were heard; how much harder it must be when they were living with a disability and the resulting discrimination. There were many similar stories, yet it did not take much to make a difference. Jaipur Foot was an inspirational organization changing lives with technologically advanced prosthetics that cost under $70. It was vital to create meaningful change in the world and to empower one another, one education at a time, one artificial limb at a time and one girl at a time.

76. **Ms. Houbolt** (Observer for Women with Disabilities Australia) said that, if women and girls were not to be left behind in the implementation of the Convention, States parties must recognize their diversity. Women and girls with disabilities experienced multiple intersecting forms of discrimination that must be addressed in laws and policies at the national and international levels.

77. States parties should also reject anything that contravened the Convention, and her organization was extremely concerned that the contents of the proposed Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine constituted a human rights violation. Women with disabilities, especially those with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, were most at risk of forced medical treatment. She called for

involuntary sterilization to be criminalized. If the Additional Protocol were adopted, it would risk setting an international precedent. The bodies of persons with disabilities should not be invaded and the rights enshrined in the Convention were worth fighting for.

78. **Ms. Al Qassimi** (United Arab Emirates) said that discussion of the topic of girls with disabilities was timely and necessary as States forged ahead with implementation of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda. Efforts to create a fully inclusive society in her country were based on empowerment, since persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, had the drive and commitment to determine their own future and contribute to their communities. The United Arab Emirates had launched a national strategy for the empowerment of persons with disabilities, which recognized the unique role of women and girls in contributing to national development. At all levels of employment, her country supported the development of skills; however, everything began with education, and special access was guaranteed for women and girls early on. The Ministry of Education and Community Development worked with service providers and educational institutions to ensure that students with disabilities had the best opportunities to achieve academic success. Family empowerment was the key to inclusion.

79. **Ms. Porrero** (European Union) said that 27.5 per cent of women in the European Union declared a disability, versus 23 per cent of men. The data also showed that women and girls with disabilities were systematically disadvantaged in terms of poverty risk and employment compared with men with disabilities, while the educational gap between girls with disabilities and those without was persistent. European legislation provided protection against gender discrimination in employment and services and discrimination on the basis of disability in the area of employment.

80. The data on violence was of particular concern, since 34 per cent of women with disabilities reported experiencing physical and sexual partner violence. The upcoming accession by the European Union to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence should contribute to reducing those figures.

81. Four of the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights were linked to gender equality and women with disabilities. Gender equality, including the situation of women and girls with disabilities, was also a priority in the European Union's external activities; a gender analysis was compulsory for all development cooperation projects and programmes.

82. The European Union was convinced of the importance of addressing gender-specific issues in the disability agenda as well as mainstreaming disability matters throughout the gender agenda. Since they were potentially competing issues, it was important to find a win-win approach.

83. **Ms. Huovinen** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that girls and young women with disabilities were often excluded from relevant discussions and experienced multiple forms of discrimination, all of which affected their self-esteem. Full and effective consultation on matters such as education, labour, political participation and sexual and reproductive health was essential. It would be useful to learn about best practices in which girls and young women with disabilities were fully involved in policymaking.

84. **Ms. Chacón** (Costa Rica) said that women with disabilities in Costa Rica, including herself, had needed to advocate for their inclusion in the development of public policies, programmes and plans, as the Convention required. Awareness had been raised within the National Council for Persons with Disabilities of the fact that, when disability was addressed solely from the perspective of "persons", it did not take into account the different measures that may be needed for women and girls. In addition, it had been stressed to the National Women's Institute and other public institutions that programmes for women and girls in Costa Rica were also for women and girls with disabilities. Women with disabilities had been included in the national gender equality policy adopted in May 2018 and the Minister for Women had expressly committed to mainstreaming the subject of women and girls with disabilities throughout all the related plans and programmes. Specific measures for women with disabilities could also be found throughout the action plan developed to implement the national family violence prevention plan. Although challenges clearly remained, the progress made to date would not have been possible without the efforts of women with disabilities and their participation should be supported by States parties.

85. **Ms. Pearce** (Observer for the Women's Refugee Commission) said that her organization worked to promote the rights of all displaced women, children and young people, including those with disabilities. It focused on preventing gender-based violence, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services, and promoting socioeconomic empowerment in humanitarian settings. Humanitarian crises brought enormous risks for women and girls, and the skills and potential of women and girls with disabilities were often overlooked in such environments. Her organization

worked with them to identify gaps and come up with ways to improve humanitarian practice. It collaborated with a growing network of national and local organizations representing women with disabilities in conflict-affected countries. Such women could make life-saving contributions, including by raising awareness of disability issues among traditional humanitarian actors and monitoring basic protection concerns in the population. The organizations also supported global commitments to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development efforts.

86. The guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action being developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee would mark a significant step forward. However, to ensure non-discrimination, the guidelines must be gender-sensitive and recognize the leadership role that groups representing women with disabilities could play in humanitarian action. She would like to see traditional humanitarian actors seeking technical advice from organizations representing women with disabilities, and international organizations recruiting women with disabilities; for that to happen, donors needed to increase funding to representative organizations led by women to cover their operational costs in those contexts. The Women's Refugee Commission stood ready to support States parties in integrating those priorities.

87. **Ms. Manboubeh-Khalough** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, even prior to its accession to the Convention in 2009, the Islamic Republic of Iran had enacted a comprehensive law in 2003 that supported the rights of persons with disabilities through the elimination of discrimination and enhanced social engagement. For greater consistency with the provisions of the Convention and the human rights-based approach, a revised law had been adopted by the Iranian parliament in 2018. In May 2018, with the support of the Iranian State welfare organization, a café had been opened in Tehran that was staffed by persons with Down syndrome and autism, including girls.

88. **Ms. Orefellen** (Observer for the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry), speaking also on behalf of the Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, said that women and girls with disabilities were known to experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence, including forced medical and psychiatric interventions. Intrusive medical practices such as forced sterilization, forced electroshock treatment and solitary confinement were widespread and some were used more frequently on women. In addition, some practices were more traumatizing for women who had suffered from sexual or other violence. Research showed that many women and girls in psychiatric units had experienced violence or abuse earlier in their lives. Violence against women and their reactions to it often became an entry point to coercive psychiatric measures. A psychiatric diagnosis could take away women's power to name their own experiences and create a basis for mental health detention and forced treatment. Such violent acts were authorized by domestic laws, and were therefore not recognized as acts of violence or ill-treatment and went unpunished. Women and girls with disabilities were not only being left behind but were also frequently being locked up, segregated from society and deprived of all possibilities for inclusion and participation.

89. States parties could not talk credibly about leaving no one behind and inclusion without unlocking the doors to mental health facilities. There could be no full equality without respect for physical and mental integrity or the right to freedom from sexual and psychiatric violence. The Council of Europe's proposed Additional Protocol to the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine was of great concern, since it authorized mental health detention and non-consensual psychiatric treatment. It did not protect rights and dignity but rather legitimized grave human rights violations and discriminated against persons with psychosocial disabilities. The adoption of that instrument would certainly and deliberately leave them behind and all human rights bodies and States parties must prevent that outcome. In the meantime, States parties could take inspiration from other regional mechanisms.

90. **Ms. Almofadhi** (Saudi Arabia) said that the education she had received at her specialist school had enabled her to pursue her personal dream, and she had been offered a permanent job there after graduation. She had been able to participate in many events that supported women with disabilities, including as a student speaker at an event organized by the national Down Syndrome Society. She was very grateful to her parents and her country for their continual guidance and support.

91. **Ms. Manombe-Ncube** (Namibia) said that disability was not gender neutral. All women and girls faced inequality, but especially women and girls with disabilities owing to discrimination and social norms and perceptions. In partnership with UNICEF, Namibia had embarked on a region-wide assessment to examine the challenges faced by children with disabilities, especially girls. The aim was to ensure that the 2013 sectoral policy on inclusive education addressed their needs and to come up with real solutions to fill any gaps. She wondered how States could ensure strong self-esteem and self-actualization among women and

girls living in rural areas. Lastly, she observed that women with disabilities were not included in the Commission on the Status of Women and that they did not attend its sessions.

92. **Ms. Panasiuk** (Ukraine) said that national gender policies, such as the one currently being developed by Ukraine, should be inclusive and should not make a distinction between women who had disabilities and those who did not. Women and girls should have the opportunity to attend classes, not only at school but also through external courses, on how to represent their rights and increase their involvement in political and decision-making processes. Indeed, to be successful in the competitive modern world, women could not afford to retreat into themselves but must show solidarity with one another. In Ukraine, the "Shkola Zenskoy Politiki" programme had helped women with disabilities to share their experiences with women who had not lived with disabilities.

93. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), Co-Chair, said that even though the Convention provided added value to the human rights agenda of the United Nations in the context of the situation of women and girls, the initial phase of its implementation had fallen short of expectations. The election of new members to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities offered renewed hope that the specific requirements of women and girls with disabilities would be fully taken into consideration in the context of the implementation of the Convention.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.